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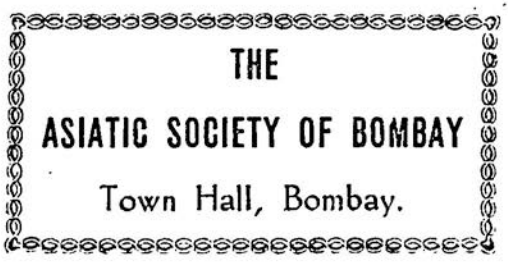

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GREAT PAINTERS.

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IL BIGLIETTO D'AMORE.

A Contadina (of Frescati) dictating to one of the Scribes who ply in the Streets of Rome.

THE ORIGINAL PICTURE PAINTED AT ROME BY

J. P. DAVIS.

THOUGHTS

ON

GREAT PAINTERS.

BY

J. P. DAVIS

PAINTER.

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LONDON:

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1866.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

No one I hope who takes up this volume will expect to find in it the continuous interest of a Novel or Romance. It is all on the subject of Art, a uniformity which has added greatly to the difficulty of writing, and may perhaps increase the trouble of reading it. The chapters however are short, and supply convenient resting-places which I should be glad to know had been appropriated; for the thoughts of an Author are worth little unless they stimulate thought in others, a result which can scarcely ensue when works are read off at a heat—I have endeavoured to avoid technicalities, and to eschew metaphysics, and I hope I shall not be deemed superficial, because I am intelligible—The Arts are a beaten, but not an exhausted subject, and every fresh volunteer in that field, like a new Commentator on Shakspeare, is received I think with pleasure. The views I entertain of Art are expressed as conscientiously as if given in evidence in a law-court; where I happen to differ from established authorities I have expressed my dissent without hesitation; but I have in no single instance advanced opinions for the

mere sake of novelty, or to startle attention by paradoxes—I shall willingly receive correction from those who understand the subject better than myself, but to those who may happen to be less acquainted with it, my dissertations perhaps may not be wholly useless. The question has often been asked me, and by educated travellers in Continental Galleries, 'What is it that constitutes the peculiar merit of the great work before us?' It was not quite easy to answer this interrogatory *impromptu*, and to minds not prepared to receive the information—but I have endeavoured in some degree to meet the spirit of the question in the digests which follow of the styles of the leading Masters —marking by broad and distinct touches their peculiar characteristics, and illustrating each by comparison with others—It is right perhaps to add, that these essays are no compilations, but have been formed by intimate acquaintance with the originals of the works described, and by long and earnest reflection on them.

J. P. DAVIS.

June 1862.

*** This volume was left complete by the Author, but circumstances unnecessary to enter on have delayed its publication since his lamented death, in September 1862.

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INTRODUCTION.

Art has its revolutions as well as Politics, and usually reflects the character of its age and country—The aspects of Kingdoms buried in the depths of immense Antiquity, are disclosed to us through their Arts—Egypt, dimly deciphered through her Hieroglyphics, becomes distinctly visible in her Sculptures, which have made us as well acquainted with her contour and costumes, her quaint superstitions, and barbaric Kings, as were the inhabitants of Thebes or Memphis—Nineveh, known to us only by her name, but disentombed by our enterprising travellers, stands revealed in her graven relics—Greece, the lamp of Art, still irradiates the world, but her Sculpture, and the Mythology which it embodies, was nothing more than the personification of her own character, its elegant genius, taste, and sensibility—Strong in their inherent immortality, her Arts survived herself; but they survived not, merely to illustrate History, or to amuse the Antiquarian—It was not for *her* Apollo to fly with a faint shriek from his deserted temples; still through successive ages his divine image has continued to receive

homage as devout as was offered him by his kneeling worshippers 'at Delphos or elsewhere'—Ancient Rome had no Art, and in this instance, the very absence of Art is characteristic of the National mind—Rome was too busy in slaying and conquering to have either time or inclination for lighter accomplishments—Descending into the Middle Ages, the Arts become frightfully indicative of the general mind; there is nothing in historic chronicle, monkish legend, or vague tradition, which marks so strongly the gloom, austerity, and superstition of those dismal times as the pictures of the period—The subjects selected are almost invariably of an appalling character—Martyrdoms, Penances, and especially Last Judgments, in which the figures of the condemned always form the prominent groups; and the Painters seem to have racked their invention to depict new monsters to affright, and new torments to excruciate the miserable culprits—Such were the works which those Ages demanded from their Artists, and which, to judge from their frequent repetition, were gazed on with cordial satisfaction—But with the revival of learning, the fierceness of superstition was mitigated—Art assumed a fairer character, and grace and beauty began to dawn in the works of the Italian Painters. At length arose Michael Angelo, the type of an Age burning with intellectual energy; authoritative as the Church which delighted to employ his talents, he astonished the world with a display of unprecedented

power; and like that Church, his style still exacts homage by its prescriptive grandeur even from those who deny its infallibility—The reign of Leo X. finds its representative in Raffaelle; the gentle, the majestic, the graceful, the *humane*—But the honours of Art at that period were not monopolised by Rome—The cupolas of Parma were irradiated by the Saints and Angels of Correggio, while Venice exulted in the magnificence of Titian, who employed his pencil alternately in illustrating her piety, and in celebrating her military prowess—He found time, however, occasionally for lighter labours, and indulged the luxuriant tastes of the great Republic with impersonations of female beauty which the Medicean Venus, were she as living as she looks, might envy.

These were the four great luminaries, who appearing simultaneously in 1500, gave immortality to that epoch, as the grand era of Art —

> First in the race which led to Glory's goal,
> They won and passed away.

The School which followed next in succession, that of Bologna, has been called Eclectic, a term suggested by the celebrated sonnet of Agostino Carracci, which affects to embody the principles of his School, and infers that a great style in Painting may be compounded, like certain dishes, of a mixture of heterogeneous ingredients. This sonnet must be looked at as a mere *jeu d'esprit*, for the recipé it contains was never applied

to their practice by the Carracci, whose style was distinctly their own. They had talent enough to vindicate the declining Art, and attained an eminence which for a long period, remained not only unrivalled, but unapproached—Art indeed, during the ensuing century, sank into inanity; but at length, two Avaters appeared at once, scattering around them the effulgence of original and unanticipated Genius—These were Rubens and Rembrandt—Painters whose styles, as if to render their advent the more remarkable, were the antipodes of each other—One seemed to have sprung from a rainbow, revelling in radiant hues, but marshalling them with prismatic exactness; the other was a gleam in the tempest—a single flash, but that of such redeeming brilliancy as to eclipse the brightest lights of most other painters—It would be unjust, while adverting to the Arts of that period, to pass without praise those dear little Dutch drolleries, redolent of stumpy boors and dowdy *vrows*, and all sorts of beautifully-done ridiculous things, which we admire and deride, love and laugh at—What Connoisseur, however refined and classical, does not covet the gems of the Dutch School at any price?

The Dutch and Flemish Schools disappeared in their turn, and Art seemed threatened with total extinction; when lo! believe it Romans and believe it Greeks! Europe was destined to witness its next resuscitation in two *English* Painters, Hogarth and

Reynolds—Hogarth is entitled, almost beyond any other Artist, to the palm of originality; there had not been in Art a single example bearing the slightest resemblance to his style—It was fortunate for those times that Reynolds crossed the path of Hogarth—Never did two great geniuses rise in more direct antagonism—Hogarth, although a consummate painter, considered his Art rather as a means than an end—His vocation was that of a great moral reformer; his instincts led him to flagellate vice and folly, without the slightest regard to rank or station, and his quarry was so abundant, that his vigorous cat-o'nine-tails never languished for want of employment—Reynolds, on the contrary, had no perception but for Nature in her fairest forms, Society in its brightest aspects, and assuredly the portraits which he has left of the rank and intelligence, the beauty and matronage of England, bear such an impress of mental cultivation and moral worth, that we find it difficult to believe that the personages they represent could have belonged to the same age and country with the knaves and fools who figure in the pictures of Hogarth.

Reynolds dropt his mantle, but no one caught although many scrambled for it; nor did anything appear in Art worth noticing, until the commencement of the French Revolution—It might have been expected, that amidst that wild Saturnalia of conflicting principles and infuriated passions, all the finer pursuits

of life would have been extinguished; when lo! from amidst that boiling vortex arose a Painter who had founded his taste on the severest principles of Antique Art, uncompromising correctness and rigid simplicity—That Artist was David, himself an ultra-republican, but whose style, assuredly, took no tinge from the mad confusion of his times; but it was as certainly elicited by that impulsion which the Revolution gave to talent of all sorts, and which, emancipating Genius from the degrading thraldom of Fashion, and the shallow foppery of Academies, left it to follow its own inspirations. David, like every founder of an original style, had the misfortune to be caricatured by his imitators; his *own* figures are not those stony effigies which provoke laughter in the works of his scholars; nevertheless, his predilection for Sculpture is certainly too evident, and it was impossible that a style of painting so deficient in active vitality, could long endure in the mercurial atmosphere of France—Accordingly, a new School sprang up, calling itself the *Romantic*, in contradistinction to that of David, which it defied to the teeth, and which had been denominated the *Classical*. The Romanticists, like their political predecessors, went mad with recovered liberty; they affected to draw incorrectly, disdained all rules of composition, used pallet-knives instead of brushes, and played as many pranks, graphically speaking, as Don Quixote in the Sierra Morena—Happily a third class of Artists ap-

peared, similarly to those grave persons who are said on classical authority to interfere in riots, and who calm by their dignity and good sense the popular effervescence—I allude to De la Roche, Daveira, the Scheffers, and some others, who not only contrived to allay the commotion, but to reconcile the belligerents. In other words, they united in their styles, the conflicting principles of the classical and romantic schools, adding to correct drawing and scientific composition, the charm of picturesque effect and harmonious colouring—Their works do honour to France, and had they stopt at that point, they had done well and wisely.

But mutability is the lot of all things human—a new competitor appeared in the lists, and the palm of Art was next decreed to Germany—and wherefore? Had the German Artists achieved any extraordinary triumph? Had they astonished the world with some brilliant inspiration, or startling novelty? Not at all—the sole ground of the pre-eminence thus claimed and conceded, was simply the revival of a style long dead and buried, the exploded practice of Fresco-painting. All *manies* originate in Germany, and whenever that fanciful people choose to mount a new hobby, the other nations of Europe are sure to get up behind them and ride it to death—Accordingly, Fresco became the order of the day, insomuch that the practice of the Oil-pencil was almost denounced, as a mere imposture. France, so tenacious of her Artistic reputation, caught

at the Antique novelty, many of her best Artists either painting in Fresco, or endeavouring to make their oil-paintings look as like Fresco as possible; while in England, through the instrumentality of some German-minded Amateur, or Artist, or both, that style was obtruded into our public edifices, forced on our reluctant painters, and, in a word, crammed down the throats of the public—We were informed, in a 'Report of the Royal Commission of Fine Arts, 1832,' that 'Breadth, Grandeur, and Simplicity, were characteristics of Fresco;' in other words that greatness of style was indigenous to mortar, and that Artists who were unable to impart that quality to canvas, might draw inspiration from the lively stimulus of a wall—We have one obligation to the German School, assuredly; it has tested the capabilities of Fresco, at least in their modern application, to their utmost extent—At Munich, at Dresden, at Vienna, at Berlin; from Palaces, Churches, and Museums, to Theatres, Bier Halles, and Public Gardens, Fresco inundates the walls, within and without, resembling, indeed, some growth of mural vegetation, rather than works of human skill—And what is the result? Does it accomplish what public taste has a right to expect from the Art of Painting? Should Fresco be cultivated as a National style? The question, I think, admits but of one reply, and that is—a decisive No. And let us not be answered with vain references to Michael Angelo, Raffaelle, and Correggio; these illus-

trious men were as exceptional in executive power, as in mental *calibre*, and when such Artists appear again, we shall hail them with acclamation, whatever be the material which they may think fit to employ.

But independently of the practical medium, the Germans have committed a mistake of such magnitude in the philosophy of their Art, as, in so thinking a people, is really astonishing—It is an admitted principle, that Painting cannot express narrative; that is to say, a *series* of events cannot be represented in the same picture, except by the sacrifice of that perspicuity which is the first principle of Art—But what is the practice of the German School, as evinced in the works of its leading Masters? Vast spaces expand before us, crowded with such varieties of incident, and with figures so innumerable, that the eye in vain endeavours to follow them; it is a style of Art purely democratical, all subordination is disclaimed, and each figure presses forward, thinking apparently it has as great a right to be seen as the rest. Look, for instance, at the great picture by Kaulbach of the 'Siege of Jerusalem' in the new Palace at Berlin. At the top of this immense composition, appear the Supreme Powers, surrounded by circles of Seraphim, and pronouncing the doom of Jerusalem—Below, the Emperor Titus is seen with his whole army, advancing to the attack of the devoted city, within whose walls are depicted the inhabitants, undergoing all the horrors of famine, as

related by Josephus; gnawing their own limbs, and eating each other. On the left, a crew of demagogues and mutineers are driven from the gates by a detachment of Angels—Then comes the storming of the City, with all the incidents common to such events; mixed up among the combatants appear frantic matrons, terrified children, and young virgins clinging to each other, or made prisoners, and tied by their captors to the tails of their horses—In front of the picture, and meant, I believe, for the principal figure, stands the High Priest, surrounded by his family, and committing suicide—On the right, a beneficent spirit is calling together the remnant of the Jewish Tribes, and sheltering them under the wings of the New Covenant—And all this in one picture! The first result is, that figures so numerous are, of necessity, so small in proportion to the size of the canvas, that they are deficient both in dignity and effect, resembling in fact a crowd of marionettes. But the main and inexpiable fault is the utter absence of *Unity*; the details, it is true, are often beautifully executed, but of what value are parts, except as constituents of a whole?

And is this *all* which candid criticism can say of the German School? Certainly not. It must be admitted that the exuberance I describe is not a fault allied to weakness; *that* defect, at least, cannot be charged on Artists so prolific in Invention that they seem absolutely bewildered by the affluence of their own con-

ceptions. Nor have they, in falling back on foregone modes of practice, lost the freshness of original feeling —Groups are frequently seen in their works, which if detached from the general *mêlée*, would form beautiful pictures in themselves, and which look more like happy accidents caught instantaneously from Nature, than things spun from the brain—But the great charm of German Art is a certain purity of feeling, a breathing of religious sentiment which pervades it throughout; the deeply-felt conceptions of Overbeck, however deficient in pictorial effect, are marked by an almost Apostolical devoutness. We are all well acquainted with the graceful outlines of Retzsch, nor can the works of Hess and Bendemann be looked on without high admiration. The Frescos of the latter, in the Royal Palace at Dresden, representing the various conditions of human life, its occupations and labours from the cradle to the grave, are conceived in a spirit of genial humanity, excelling especially in representations of beauty, youth, and childhood; they are free, too, from the discordant effects so frequent in modern Frescos, wherein all sorts of vivid colours are thrown about in jarring proximity, giving them the appearance of coats-of-arms, or of large court-cards.

I lately made a visit to the Studio of Cornelius at Munich, and it seemed to me, that I had been admitted into the very sanctuary of Poetry and Taste. Beautiful compositions met the eye on all sides, drawn in lightly-

shaded outlines, fraught with delicious reveries and fanciful luxuries of thought; and were the practice of Art a mere elegant recreation, I cannot imagine a more fascinating employment, to a fertile fancy and a practised hand, than that of making such Cartoons. But the very facility induced by the crayon, is fatal to the demands of the pencil—On turning to the Paintings which are copied from those designs, the whole illusion vanishes; the bright idealisms become unmanageable, they are neither sustained by appropriate colour, nor embodied by effective *chiaroscuro*; the powers of the Artist have been dissipated in dreams, or wasted on preparatory processes; the means have been substituted for the end, and the captivating Cartoon becomes an intolerable picture.

From the Schools of the Continent we turn with interest to our own, and anxiously enquire, what is its position, what its prospects? The Artists of England assuredly have done their duty; they have manifested, at intervals, and by individual efforts, talents which sufficiently refute that charge of National incapacity with which foreign criticism has not scrupled to assail us;—and this they have done at enormous disadvantage, for Art, in this country, has, during the last eighty-five years, been ridden by an incubus, which has stifled its energy and crushed its independence; nor will it ever, until divested of that incumbrance, erect itself into the fullness of its stature, and be seen in its true dimensions.

I allude of course to the Royal Academy, an Institution which differs little from others of the same sort, when and wherever established, except that it has developed, in more than ordinary luxuriance, the corruptions natural to such bodies—The whole history of State Academies bears witness to the fact, that they have invariably tended to frustrate the objects which they were meant to promote. The greatest masters of Art, those especially who in the fifteenth century carried it to such supreme perfection, were no scions of Academies—but subsequently, Princes and Statesmen, laudably anxious that their own times should reflect something of that splendour which irradiated those of their predecessors, endeavoured to call forth new races of great Artists by patronage and premiums; they instituted Academies, with all the pompous paraphernalia of Presidentships, Professorships, Lectureships, and all sorts of *ships*, which turned out miserable craft, useless for everything but show—These forcing-houses of excellence proved, in the experiment, to be nurseries of mediocrity, schools of intrigue, hotbeds of pretension, and graves of talent.

In the train of Academies came Public Exhibitions, which in their character and consequences have been fatally injurious to public taste—Hundreds of pictures are got together at a given signal, and after the Managers have appropriated the best places to their own works, subjects the most anomalous, effects the

most discordant, are jammed together, in ridiculous juxtaposition, and suffocating contact—Exhibitors soon discover that amidst such a *mêlée*, any attempt at the refinements of Art is worse than useless—Stare and glare therefore become the order of the day—No trick is thought contemptible provided it entraps attention, and, as it happens at a Christmas Pantomime, the greatest buffoon is often the greatest favourite.

There is in Art, as in Morals, a perpetual conflict between right and wrong, and assuredly the evil principle is at this time particularly rampant. It might have been expected that our National Gallery, an Institution expressly devoted to works of excellence, selected specimens of deceased Masters—would have been held sacred from mischievous whims and capricious innovations—But a new principle has been set up—We are now told that excellency, if not absolutely repudiated, is wholly unimportant to the character of the Collection. The walls are henceforth to be embellished with multitudinous examples of Painting, or attempts at painting, illustrative of the history of Art from its infancy to its decrepitude; and the works of obscure practitioners, disinterred from just oblivion, are, as links of the great Chronological chain, to form the staple stock of the Establishment. It will be our duty when we visit the National Gallery, instead of indulging ourselves in the childish gratification of admiring fine paintings, to study these interesting ex-

humations, and register in our minds with solemn precision (assisted by the huge Catalogue now in preparation) all particulars relative to their birth, parentage, and adventures—And this is called Art-education!

MICHAEL ANGELO.

MICHAEL ANGELO.

THE great name of Michael Angelo is, perhaps, less identified in the public mind as a definite idea than that of any other Artist of the highest class. It is to the general ear a name and little else. He exists not in easel pictures; his style cannot be adequately rendered through the medium of engravings; and among the numerous travellers who have visited him in his sanctuary of the Sistine Chapel, a large majority, I suspect, retain no other impression than that of having witnessed something awful and visionary, which, like the phantasms of an oppressive dream, they comprehended imperfectly, and are glad to forget. Great, indeed, must be the disappointment of those who expect to find, in the Sistine Chapel, works calculated either to delight the eye or recreate the fancy. The faculties of Michael Angelo, even had he been born in a frivolous age, were not of that order which stoops to adjust its impulses to popular taste; but, fortunately, he lived in an era which demanded from genius its grandest developments; and his career exhibits the splendid result of great powers in conjunction with great opportunities. In Julius II. he met with a mind which in its lofty and energetic character

bore a strong resemblance to his own. The Pontiff, like the Artist, regarded Art not as the mere instrument of tasteful enjoyment, but as the eloquent illustrator of Religion, and under that exalting impression were elicited the great works which adorn the Sistine Chapel.

In order to approach to a due appreciation of the powers of Michael Angelo, we must regard him not only at the elevation which he attained, but on the platform from whence he ascended. Art, it is true, had in the fourteenth century given some signs of resuscitation, but it had as yet produced nothing which could serve even as a hint for the conduct of such a work as that projected by *him*, much less for the style which he originated. Let us imagine him standing in the Sistine Chapel, the walls yet bare, his conceptions yet unmethodised. The precincts which he had undertaken to embellish were of enormous dimensions, and divided into varieties of architectural forms. How was it possible that so immense an area could be filled, but by admitting such complications of subject, and such a multiplicity of figures, as must be fatal to perspicuity, simplicity, and grandeur? This difficulty the great Artist met and vanquished by one magnificent idea. He determined to condense the whole series of designs into a single subject. That subject is, indeed, one which manifests an unprecedented grasp of conception. It embraces the extreme points of the past and the future, and comprises the whole history of man in relation to his Maker. It begins with the Creation of the World, and ends with the consummation of

all things in the tremendous spectacle of the Last Judgment.

The series of subjects involved in this arrangement, concatenated by links, but intrinsically *One*, he classed into three divisions, the first of which, comprising nine compartments, occupies the roof, and commences with the sublime picture of God dividing the Light from the Darkness. Then follow in succession :—The Creation of the Sun and Moon—the Formation of the World —Adam awakened to Life—Eve presented to him—the Temptation, Fall, and Expulsion from Paradise —God's Covenant with Noah—and the eighth compartment, which is assigned to the Deluge, concludes the history of the antediluvian world. But a ninth is added, showing that the human race has survived that catastrophe, is again on its march, and engaged in its former occupations. An incident from the life of Noah, introduced episodically, implies also that sin and frailty had not been extinguished by the Deluge.

The second division is transferred to the side-walls of the chapel ; and here the Artist has dropped the narrative mode of illustration, substituting for groups single figures. In no part of his performance has he manifested more consummate judgment than in the adoption of this expedient. Had he continued to multiply his groupings, it was not in the power of Art to have redeemed the whole from complexity and littleness. He felt, too, that the cycle of subjects required, like a single picture, principal objects ; and those he has supplied in that glorious assemblage of Prophets

and Sybils, who, seated in solemn majesty, are ranged along the walls. These august impersonations, the noblest, as single figures, which Art has ever given to the world, excite involuntary reverence, and impart to the artistic combination, unity and repose. The events witnessed, or predicted by the Prophets, are associated with their persons in the mind of the Spectator, and thus the Scriptural narrative is perspicuously carried forward—Some striking incidents, nevertheless, of Biblical History are distributed at intervals:—The Brazen Serpent—the Heroism of Judith—the Triumph of David, and The Fall of Haman. In the interstitial compartments appear the individuals who compose the genealogy of Christ, the last of whom introduces that epoch which the preceding subjects have dimly shadowed out, and in which the sacred prophecies were fulfilled by the advent of the Divine Messiah.

The third division, which occupies the whole space at the east end of the Chapel, is appropriated to the painting of the Last Judgment.

Such is the great work of Michael Angelo, which, it is almost superfluous to observe, whether considered in relation to vastness of conception, or mastery of performance, claims place amongst the loftiest achievements of human genius. Having organised his subject, the Artist had next to consider the style of its execution, and where was he to look for *exemplars*, where find antecedents to assist in giving shape to his teeming imaginations? From the meagre and ghastly forms of Mediæval Art, a mind like his shrank, of course, with

instinctive abhorrence. He might, it is true, have reverted to the Antique, and have based his style on the beautiful creations of Grecian Sculpture. In that School, indeed, he *had* studied with all the ardour and enthusiasm it could not fail to excite, but when he had quitted the Academy, he no longer deferred to its authority; he was too great to be an Imitator, even of excellence. He felt, too, that could he have concentrated into his style all the beauty and all the purity of Greek Art, those qualities were inadequate to his purpose, incommensurate to the vast scale on which he worked, unequal to the impressions which he intended to convey—He had a higher aim than mere symmetrical perfection, or the transmission into Christian Art of Joves and Apollos. Here again, then, he had no alternative but to fall back on his own inspirations; a glorious resource! which enabled him to people the Sistine Chapel with an order of Beings yet unimagined, and to clothe them with a style of form, not imposing merely in its gigantic dimensions, but in which every line, whether squared into angular decision, or expanded into sweeping convexity, becomes a vehicle of character, and a conductor of sentiment. It is scarcely possible for anyone, not practically acquainted with Art, to imagine the difficulty of adjusting the effect of Painting to the immense height on which the Artist had to calculate, and the vast spaces he had to fill; more especially as his work, being executed in Fresco, was less capable, had the first effort failed, of after-emendation. But Michael Angelo betrays no inequality; no passage of comparative weakness implies that he occa-

sionally drooped, or that his mighty flight was sustained by effort; he expatiates in a region of level sublimity, and revels at its amazing altitude as if in his natural element—Not a figure can be pointed out in the Sistine Chapel, unless where injured by time, in which the uniform grandeur of line relaxes for a moment, in which the solemn breadth of the masses is disturbed by injudicious detail, or in which the graduated harmony of the Colouring is disturbed by a disagreeable tint. Even what is called the *Execution* is performed with so light a hand, and with such triumphant facility, that the figures seem rather flung, than traced on the walls. But however competent to indulge in the lighter graces of Art, Michael Angelo never allowed them to assume an undue ascendancy, or permitted the slightest compromise of that lofty austerity which is the essential element of his style. In him is strongly exemplified the difference between the faculties of Imagination and Fancy—preeminent in the former, he never indulges in the latter—he appeals to no trivial feeling; born to command, he stoops not to conciliate; and we feel, amidst his works, like those who are admitted into the presence of a Monarch: whatever be the sensation excited, it is not that of familiar enjoyment. But to reverence the grand and appreciate the sublime, to feel that in contemplating such works as those of the Sistine Chapel, we comprehend their aim, and sympathise with their spirit, is in itself an exalted privilege. It is difficult, while under the immediate influence of those great productions, to dispute the truth of that axiom which asserts that sublimity, in its

highest manifestations, is more than an equivalent for all other qualities ; and if that assumption be admitted, then is Michael Angelo beyond contradiction the greatest Artist who has ever existed.

Public opinion, during his own time, and long afterwards, assigned to the picture of the Last Judgment the highest place among the works of Michael Angelo—It was long considered a synonym for all that is grand and matchless in Art—Subsequent criticism, however, has rather inclined to consider that his great name as a Painter is better sustained by the compartments in the roof and on the sides of the Sistine Chapel—This opinion may have partially arisen from the fact, that those works are still fresh and untarnished, while the Last Judgment has suffered much discolouration. But setting aside accidental influences, the Last Judgment has been accused of radical deficiencies : the general arrangement has been censured as formal and unpicturesque. What a composition, it has been suggested, would Rubens have produced having such a subject to treat, and such a space to fill! Rubens unquestionably, as he has proved in most of his large works, would have dashed across the wall his groups and complications of groups in every variety of picturesque combination—But, be it recollected, the principles on which these great Masters worked were wholly dissimilar—When Rubens had produced a splendid work of Art, his purpose was accomplished ; but Art with Michael Angelo was not the end but the instrument. He no more thought, in this mighty performance, of delighting his spectators with an attractive painting, than a great Preacher, in

declaiming on the solemn themes of Death and Judgment, would think of captivating his hearers with florid rhetoric and ornamental figures of speech—That simplicity which characterises the composition of the Last Judgment he considered, no doubt, to accord best with the awful nature of the subject; but the vast varieties of action exhibited in the separate groups, attest sufficiently that he did not adopt that mode of treatment from any lack of imaginative power. Sterner emotions were to be awakened than admiration of Art, and, assuredly, the solemn exhortation, which is in this great work addressed to Mankind, is not given in a tone which *allures* to repentance—The Messiah appears, not as the merciful Redeemer, but the inexorable Judge. He turns, not to the right, but to the left; He fulminates his sentence on the Wicked, and they tumble thunder-stricken. These groups, precipitated through the air, are seized by demons who spring from the abyss beneath; and it is here that the Artist has developed his peculiar and amazing powers—Milton has not approached, nor Dante exceeded, those terrible images, in which expression is carried to its utmost extremes; from the frantic agony which implores, to the fierce desperation which resists, or to the silent stupefaction of despair—That part of the picture where the Dead are seen rising from their graves is peculiarly admirable. The tremendous trumpet is still sounding over their heads, and they stare around in wild and dreamy astonishment, as if endeavouring to collect their perceptions. Still more terribly impressive, perhaps, are the groups which are borne to the shores of Tartarus by a

bark, instinct with spirit, and oared by enormous wings. Shrinking and recoiling from the infernal strand, the lost delinquents crouch and cling together, while their grim ferryman, a monster compound of Charon and some fiercer demon, inflicting blows with unmitigable fury, compels them to descend. Fuseli justly observes that Michael Angelo has in this vast design 'depicted every attitude which varies the human body;' but when he adds that 'he had also traced the master trait of every passion which sways the human mind,' the learned Professor certainly sacrifices his accustomed accuracy for the sake of a sonorous sentence. Michael Angelo, absorbed by his leading intention, has not frittered away his effect in subdivisions; there is little in the groups of the righteous who are ascending into Heaven, to distinguish them from the miserable sinners who are descending on the opposite side; nor have the Athletes, who officiate as Angels, the least appearance of Beings of celestial origin. As terror is the leading feeling associated with the awful idea of the Last Judgment, so has the Artist made terror the predominating sentiment of his picture; this is the chord which is struck throughout, and neither contrasts nor graduations have been admitted to perplex its effect, or to impair the force of the one appalling impression.

Notwithstanding his favourite maxim, '*ancora imparo*,' there is scarcely a man on record whose faculties were so purely intuitive as those of Michael Angelo—His genius was an instinct, which, like all instincts, was unerring in its impulse, although limited in its range. He exhibits the singular combination of talents, at once

immense and circumscribed. He sought not—in fact, was unable—to communicate to his Art those qualities which attract and delight; but he reveals her in an aspect of supernatural majesty, which, except by his ministration, the world would never have witnessed. Grace, beauty, and amenity may be found elsewhere; Raffaelle exhausted the realms of sentiment; Correggio filled his Cupolas with glory; but Michael Angelo creates the world in which he moves, and Epic style, in its simple and sublime integrity, exists only in the Sistine Chapel.

There is a sonnet, by Salvator Rosa, on the Last Judgment of Michael Angelo, written in a tone of levity ill-befitting either the subject or the Master, but if the eccentric satirist, instead of assailing the '*Gran Giudizio*,' had transferred the blame of the '*poco giudizio*,' which he complains of, to the supplementary figures which crowd the roof of the Chapel, it would be difficult to gainsay his censure. Except as exhibitions of Academic skill (and in that particular they are admirable), I cannot perceive with what purpose these obtrusive adjuncts were introduced. They express nothing, directly or inferentially; they overlay the compartments which they are meant to adorn, and they distract and oppress the eye of the spectator—But enough of this, and perhaps too much—To carp at Michael Angelo, is to lay one's hand on the Lion's mane.

This great Artist, it is said, preferred the practice of Sculpture to that of Painting, and considered his fame to be more permanently based upon it—But the world has not agreed with him. The mighty line, the *terribil*

via of Michael Angelo, effective as it is, and harmonising as it does, with the vast expanse of the Sistine Chapel, has an air of exaggeration when transferred to works of Statuary, intended for closer inspection. The distinctive element of Sculpture is Beauty; it is on this quality that Greek Art rests its claim to preeminence, nor can any Sculptor, deficient in that essential, lay claim to more than a limited reputation. There are some works of Antique Art, it is true, in which Beauty is not the leading characteristic—the Laocoon, the Gladiator, the Hercules, and a few others; but these are exceptions, and among such exceptions in Modern Art may be classed, the Moses and Lorenzo by Michael Angelo—works which, bearing a propinquity to his own genius, are 'express and admirable.' His Moses is evidently the embodiment of no human Authority. This is the inspired Lawgiver, the organ and oracle of God; he whose hands received the Tables of the Law, whose voice struck tyranny into the dust, whose bidding the very elements obeyed—The Statue, it is said, was hewn from the solid block, without a preparatory model, and looks indeed like something exploded, rather than carved, with a chisel of flame. In the statue of Lorenzo, which, in its air of solemn meditation, resembles one of the Artist's own prophets, he has, without compromising the character of Sculpture, invested it with the attributes of Painting, and impressed on the intractable material of marble the mystical *chiaroscuro* of Rembrandt or Correggio.

The claims of Michael Angelo as an Architect are best expressed in his own words. He 'hung the

Pantheon in the air '—in other words, he transferred the design of the Pagan temple to the summit of St. Peter's. —And for his share in the erection of that glorious edifice, the noblest ever raised by man to the honour of the Deity, he refused all recompense, declaring that he devoted that service to the glory of God!

May we expect that, in these our utilitarian days, such works will ever be performed again, and from such motives? Our gratitude at least is due to those mighty spirits who have shown us what the human mind is capable of performing; and if their visits, like those of angels to an earlier world, have been withdrawn, never to be repeated, let us exult in that inheritance of glory, which in their immortal works, they have bequeathed to mankind.

RAFFAELLE.

RAFFAELLE.

The transition from the works of Michael Angelo to those of Raffaelle, resembles that which we experience in turning from the pages of Milton to those of Shakespeare—From regions of Epic sublimity, we descend to the genial sphere of humanity; after contemplating an order of beings too great for our sympathies, we return to our wonted communion with Nature, and the contact of actual life. The comparison of these great men has been a favourite topic with Critics, and with much diversity of opinion. The Florentine Writers, with Vasari at their head, claim for Michael Angelo indisputable supremacy; while the Roman Critics confer on Raffaelle the title of Prince of Painters. Our own countryman, Reynolds, flings his suffrage with decisive weight into the scale of the Florentine, and that with an emphasis, which, as it appears to me, involves considerable injustice. Michael Angelo, he says, has more Imagination, Raffaelle more Fancy. Fancy! Is this a term by which to designate such powers as those of Raffaelle? What is Fancy? As I understand the term, a smaller kind of Imagination; and are such works as those of the Stanzae, or the Cartoons, to be referred to faculties of an inferior order, whatever be the

comparison by which they are tested? Still more extraordinary is the assumption on the part of Reynolds, that Raffaelle built his style on that of Michael Angelo. 'He was going on very contentedly,' says that eminent critic, 'in the style of Pietro Perugino,' until, obtaining sight, by favour of the Pope's architect, of the works of Buonarotti, then in progress, his genius took flame and burst into sudden effulgence. The story of Raffaelle's clandestine admittance into the Sistine Chapel, is at best a little apocryphal; we may well believe, however, that under whatever circumstances he first saw the works of Michael Angelo, he beheld them with boundless admiration, thanking God, it is recorded, that he was born in the same age with so great a painter! Here was the congeniality of great minds, nor could two such spirits have met, perhaps, without some participation of lustre—but that the genius of Raffaelle owed its inspiration to any exterior influence, that it would not have expanded into full maturity although Michael Angelo had never existed, is a preposterous supposition. It would be difficult, indeed, to find amidst all the Schools of Art, two styles more radically different than those of the great Masters in question. Buonarotti inhabits a sphere inaccessible except to himself; he is purely despotic, he admits but one style of form, and to that style, with little concession to age, sex, or character, he compels his agents to adjust themselves. Raffaelle, on the contrary, exists but in his subject; he speaks only through his actors, he recognises no form or styles of form, except as he finds them in the interminable varieties of Nature—And hence it

is, perhaps, that his works, harmonising more with our habitual perceptions, strike us less forcibly at first than those of his rival, authoritative as are the latter, and commanding attention by their imperious peculiarity. We are startled by the appearance of a giant, while figures of the most perfect symmetry, but of ordinary dimensions, pass unobserved—True it is, that while standing in the Sistine Chapel, while under the immediate influence of works which seem, like the voice of an organ among other instruments, to bear down and annihilate all competition, we bow with implicit reverence before the genius of Michael Angelo, we acknowledge his divine right and absolute supremacy—But when we have escaped the enchanted circle, and venture, at a safe distance, to exercise our deliberate judgment; when we contemplate Raffaelle, sweeping in his boundless range through the whole circle of human character, and touching every trait of emotion with a hand at once so bold and so delicate, so energetic, yet discriminating,—we feel that such genius admits of *no* superiority, that the modest painter of Urbino has an *equal* claim, *at least* to our homage, with the mighty autocrat of the Sistine Chapel.

With that tendency to extremes which is common to dissenting Critics, a set of commentators have arisen who insist that Raffaelle, so far from having any obligations to Michael Angelo, fell back, in his latest and grandest works, on the barbarous style of his earliest preceptors—If one proposition is erroneous, the other is ridiculous—He who discovers in the later works of Raffaelle any resemblance to Pietro Perugino, or Luca

Signorelli, or Timoteo Viti, must be a lynx-eyed critic indeed—It is surprising, nevertheless, to observe with what a halo of splendour the subsequent renown of Raffaelle has invested his earlier performances. There is nothing, surely, in these juvenile essays which gives promise of an extraordinary man: they are conventional in style and timid in execution. His insipid virgins and sleepy-eyed *Bambini* are repetitions of prescriptive models, handed down from time immemorial; he scarcely seems at this time to have dared to trust his own perceptions, yet those works are sought after with avidity, purchased at enormous prices, and treasured as inestimable gems. The only sentiment, meanwhile, which they excite in those who choose to think for themselves, is astonishment that the mind, which even in its boyhood could luxuriate over those elaborate trifles, should, under any possible development, have elicited the works in the Vatican, and the Cartoons; the terrific Angel who smites the plunderer in the Temple —the mighty Paul thundering from the Areopagus— Raffaelle assuredly did not, like Michael Angelo, start into precocious perfection, he did not win the world at a blow—He lisped before he uttered, and his utterance had been long exercised before it reached the fullness of his irresistible eloquence—It was not until he commenced his works in the Camarae of the Vatican, that the genius of this great Artist expanded into its full magnitude; and that event forms the greatest epoch in the History of Art, for then were developed, not only his own amazing faculties, but the capabilities of Art itself were for the first time tested, unravelled,

and established. As Michael Angelo was the father of Epic, so was Raffaelle the creator of Historic style; nor was there anything, either in antecedent or contemporary Art, which could in the slightest degree invalidate his right to that distinction, or impair his claim to absolute originality. In glancing at the Mediæval and pre-Mediæval Schools, from the earliest Byzantines down to the commencement of the fifteenth Century, it is surprising to observe among so vast an array of practitioners such barren uniformity of style, and how rarely an attempt was made to surmount the dead level of Gothic practice, and this I venture to remark, being well aware that the School of Connoisseurship to which I have just adverted, affects to discover in the pictures of the dark ages, mines of inappreciable wealth, magnificent conceptions, expressed in a purity of style, and with a delicacy of feeling compared to which Raffaelle himself is coarse and sensual—It is unfortunate that those treasures, like images which are said to appear in the black mirrors of conjurors, are only visible to those who are determined to see them—To one Artist alone in my opinion was Raffaelle materially indebted, I allude to Fra Bartolomeo, whose grand and noble style was far in advance of his age, but even here, it was in *style* only that he could have influenced the practice of Raffaelle. The pictures of Fra Bartolomeo were almost exclusively sacerdotal; votive ornaments, involving neither pathos nor incident, nor was it possible that Raffaelle, the great expositor of mind and sentiment, could have drawn extensive aid from so limited a source.

It is intensely interesting to watch the progress of such a mind as that of Raffaelle, as he proceeded with his works in the Vatican—There is much discrepancy in dates and traditions regarding the order in which these pictures were executed; the best authority on such a subject is the internal evidence of style, but even here we are somewhat at fault, for although it is generally agreed that the 'Dispute of the Sacrament' and the 'School of Athens' were the two first completed, and nearly at the same time, the style of the latter exhibits so enlarged a maturity of power as would imply that a considerable time had elapsed between the stages of their performance—The 'Dispute of the Sacrament,' nevertheless, is exceedingly beautiful, and is designed to typify the subject of Theology, as that of Philosophy is illustrated by the 'School of Athens'—Deep thought and refined discrimination are evinced in the treatment of these subjects—The Fathers of the Church and the Sages of Philosophy are alike impressed with the stamp of profound intelligence; they are, nevertheless, different orders of men, and are accurately contradistinguished. And this classification extends to the Compositions. The arrangement of the 'Dispute of the Sacrament' is symmetrical even to solemnity, while that of the 'School of Athens' is *apparently* fortuitous, in a degree almost amounting to confusion. I say apparently, for Raffaelle did nothing by accident, and I am convinced that in the contrasted compositions of these pictures, he meant to express in the one, the regulated harmony appertaining to things *divine*, in the other, the erratic quality of speculations merely *human*. In the

'Scuola' the groups are detached, earnestly engaged in their separate discussions, wholly regardless of each other—In the 'Dispute' the Controversialists, whatever be their varieties of doctrine, seem assimilated by a common influence—They are neither scattered nor isolated—In the centre of the picture, elevated on the Sacramental Table, stands the Host, and from either side the various groups approximate towards that sacred symbol, in the presence of which all differences are reconciled, and all dissent extinguished in the unity of a common belief—In the 'School of Athens' no superhuman agency is admitted, but in the picture of the Sacrament Heaven is opened, and Deity itself revealed, as if by its visible presence to sanction the sacred councils. It may be said, that in these distinctions nothing more is expressed than the broad line of demarcation between Theology and Philosophy. True, but what I am attempting to explain is the compendious intelligence with which Raffaelle has translated these ideas into the language of Art, nor will these suggestions be deemed supererogatory, when it is recollected that the question is often asked, with what purpose was the 'School of Athens' introduced at all into a series of pictures expressly designed to illustrate religious history, and to celebrate the glory of the Church?

Next followed the 'Heliodorus' and the 'Miracle of Bolsena,' these are said to be in Raffaelle's second manner, but if so, it is difficult to understand the meaning of that term, for assuredly they are surpassed by none of his subsequent performances. The picture of the 'Heliodorus' is, in my apprehension, the most

beautiful which the Genius of Art has ever created. It is the triumph of Painting, wherein the loftiest ideality is ennobled by its material embodiment. Fraught as it is with varieties of emotion, it exemplifies, nevertheless, that refinement of principle which subordinates gesture to sentiment, for Raffaelle, although so consummate a master of action, was no constructor of attitudes. His figures are breathingly alive, but they never gesticulate for the sake of effect, and whatever be the passion portrayed, the intellectual expression is invariably that which predominates. Thus, in this sublime picture, the Despoiler of the Temple, encountered by the Apparition of the warlike Angel, falls smitten with dismay; but it is less by the brandished weapon of his supernatural assailant, or by the impulsion of his fiery steed, than by the glance of that dreadful eye flaming with divine wrath, that the sacrilegious robber is blasted and overthrown—Thus also on the opposite side, where a group of women engaged in their devotions are alarmed by the sudden tumult, there is little indication of vulgar terror; some few, indeed, shrink back with natural apprehension, but one among them, the youngest and most beautiful, strains forward with eyes dilated, and extended arms, fascinated by the celestial vision—Still more touching is the incident of the young Mother, who startled by the din, and apprehensive of danger, though uncertain of its cause, snatches up her children instinctively, and clasps them to her bosom. The graceful action of this figure, as she turns round her head in the impulse of agitated enquiry, is exquisite beyond comment. The

noble dame who kneels in front, stately and self-possessed, exhibits appropriate, but less emphatic gesture. Her back is turned to the spectator, and consequently, as painters express it, she *looks into the picture*; this arrangement gives distance to the figures beyond, amplitude to the space in which they move, and depth to the background.

That graduated scale of character always sought by Raffaelle, is preserved even among the superhuman agents. The two Angels who follow the mounted Warrior (whom we may assume to be meant for St. Michael) are apparently of inferior rank; they are less splendidly arrayed, and have not his nobility of aspect. They resemble rather that class of spirits described by Milton as 'plebeian angels militant.' But they are armed, like their leader, with divine authority, and wielding weapons of chastisement, they dart through the air on the objects of their attack with the velocity of shooting meteors; their shadows flung far below them on the pavement, show the altitude in which they move—Some confusion, perhaps, of spirit and matter is involved, as among the combatants in 'Paradise Lost;' but this perplexity, if there be any, is inseparable from the subject, and none, probably, but the Critics, enjoy the privilege of perceiving it.

The episode which introduces Pope Julius into this picture, borne on his portable throne, and surrounded by his officers in full costume (they are all portraits too), is perhaps the boldest anachronism ever ventured on in Art. And this from the hand of Raffaelle, the great *exemplar* of correctness, the very genius of pro-

priety! Vast confidence he manifested in himself when he perpetrated this remorseless anomaly, and he obtained the usual result which attends the daring of genius, that of triumphant success—It is in vain that we endeavour to defend the inconsistency, on the ground of its being an Allegory relating to the wars of Julius; we are confronted by a downright impossibility, which no motive can justify, nor any reason excuse—But what then? We feel that the whole picture derives from this group a character, a spirit and effect, which had it been omitted, nothing could have supplied. I once saw a German painter copying this work in the Vatican; in lieu of the Papal group he had substituted figures of his own, more according with the unities of time and place; this Artist had skill, and his figures were well imagined, nevertheless, what was the result? It reminded one of the French translation of 'Hamlet,' in which the Ghost is omitted. The attempt to alter the original impressed us still more strongly with its inalienable beauty, and the emendator, instead of being applauded for his taste, was laughed at for his presumption.

Nothing is more admirable in this great work, than that character of majestic repose which the Artist has communicated to a subject filled with such tumultuous action, and multiplied incidents. So grand, so regulated is the general effect, that it impresses us with the solemnity of Cathedral music; nor are the High Priest kneeling at the Altar, the ever-burning lamps, nor the ecclesiastical style of the Architecture, necessary to remind us that the event we witness relates to Biblical

History, or that it occurs within the precincts of a consecrated Temple.

The 'Miracle of Bolsena' is distinguished by a depth and richness of colour, which in such a material as Fresco, is wonderful. An equal though less obvious merit, is evinced in the consummate skill by which the arrangement is adjusted to the awkward and almost impracticable angles which it fills. The Altar at which the miracle occurs is made to surmount the windows, the communicants occupying the side-spaces; and consequently the main incident commands the composition. The monotony which must have been produced by so many figures all kneeling, is finely relieved by the introduction of the young female on the left; this figure is exquisite; lofty in stature, buoyant in step, radiant in expression, she advances towards the Altar, the beaming symbol of hope, or faith, or holy enthusiasm. The atheistical Priest is especially characteristic; it is acutely remarked of him by Northcote, that he has more the physiognomy of a bandit than an Ecclesiastic; he has very black hair and a bluish beard, and has altogether the aspect of a hard unimpressionable character—But his conversion is complete: amazed at the ocular evidence—the Divine blood effused from the consecrated wafer—his expression is not only that of instantaneous conviction, but of horror at his previous incredulity. This feeling of reverential astonishment seems to thrill through the spectators on the left, like an electric shock; there is nothing, perhaps, in the whole round of devotional subjects which approaches the intensity of expression evinced in those heads—

But the groups on the right, composed of the Pope, his Cardinals and officials, do by no means exhibit a corresponding amount of emotion; they do not indeed deport themselves with levity, but they certainly sustain the surprise of the Miracle with an equanimity, which shows, either that they consider the occasional occurrence of such incidents to be matters of course, or that they should seriously compromise their own dignity by taking too much notice of them--Some of the inferior functionaries seem entirely absorbed in the consciousness of their state-equipments, all which is perfectly characteristic, for Raffaelle sought, not satire, but truth.

In the opposite compartment, which contains the 'Deliverance of St. Peter,' the Artist had again to encounter the obstacles of bad position, and insufficient light, but he has triumphed over them with still more signal success—It may be asserted that, with the exception of the 'Notte' of Correggio, Raffaelle's 'Deliverance of St. Peter' is the most splendid example of *chiaroscuro* existing; and it is singular that both those beautiful inventions were thrown out at a time when the science of light and shadow had scarcely been developed into an effective principle. The Angel of Raffaelle is not palpably material, but dimly discernible amidst the blaze of his own glory, reminding us of the Seraph seen by the Evangelist in the Sun; and the bright halo which surrounds him, not only illuminates the picture, but seems actually to throw light into the apartment which contains it. The whole appearance of this celestial messenger, whose waving

locks float gracefully around his neck as he bends to awaken the sleeping Apostle, is beautiful in the extreme. An inferior painter would perhaps have represented the event *within* the cell instead of showing it from *without*, in order to avoid the necessity of occupying the front of the picture with the prison-bars; but Raffaelle has turned this difficulty to advantage, by marking those iron barriers with the utmost force and distinctness, and their hard stern reality, instead of counteracting, seems to enhance the beauty of the ethereal apparition. In the adjacent division where St. Peter is led forth by the Angel, the expression of the Apostle is peculiarly fine and appropriate. If, as Holy Writ informs us, 'he thought he saw a vision,' he is fully impressed, nevertheless, with the actual character of his Divine conductor, and awe-struck and astonished, averts his eyes, not daring to look on him.

It might have been inferred from the extraordinary skill in *chiaroscuro* evinced in the last-mentioned picture, that the Artist would have availed himself largely of that quality in a subject so well calculated for its display as the 'Incendio del Borgho,' which he might have shown in the full blaze of conflagration, making the light and shadow a vehicle of tremendous effect—But Raffaelle, whose element was human feeling, did not often condescend to rest the interest of his subject on mere pictorial illusion. The 'Incendio' involves a storm of commotion, flight, and terror; but even here, the kindlier emotions predominate; parents are endeavouring to save their children, children their

parents, and one individual alone, the young man who drops from the window, seems absorbed in the instinct of self-preservation.

In the picture of the 'March of Attila on Rome,' the miraculous appearance of St. Peter and St. Paul may be assumed to be a pure invention, since no mention is made in history or legend of so singular a circumstance; but the conception is splendid, enhancing the dignity of the subject, and heightening in an immense degree its picturesque effect. The Pontiff's intervention is not superseded, but authorised and rendered irresistible by his superhuman auxiliaries; the barbarian King recoils before the double rebuke as if thunderstricken, and his vast array rolls back like a refluent wave. This picture is distinguished not only for the delicate purity of its colouring, but the fine perception evinced in it of aërial perspective. And this is the more remarkable, as in the series of designs with which Raffaelle furnished Pinturriccio for the Sacristy at Sienna, and of which he himself executed the two first, there is no more recognition of that principle than one sees in the humblest specimens of china-painting. Raffaelle, it is said, obtained his first initiation into the science of aërial perspective from some German landscape-painters, with whom he made acquaintance at Florence—It may be encouraging to the Students of Art to know that the merits even of this great Master were not all intuitive.

The beautiful 'Parnassus' discloses a poetic vision, wherein the great Bards of all ages hold converse with their inspiring Deities. The figures of the Muses are

types of classical form, and exhibit in consummate perfection the union of the severe grace of the Antique with the suavity of modern elegance. Idealised to the noblest standard, they are nevertheless lovely and living women, they reflect all the refinement of Grecian Art, but they are sculpturesque in nothing but their pure and immortal beauty.

It may be observed, that the violin on which Apollo performs, and which has been the subject of so much critical comment, had been in Raffaelle's time degraded by no vulgar association. It was, on the contrary, considered the supreme test of executive skill.

If the remark be admissible that Raffaelle has in this great Series betrayed any inequality, I might presume to suggest—that the compositions of the 'Baptism of Constantine,' the 'Coronation of Charlemagne,' and the 'Justification of Leo III.' are somewhat below his usual standard. There are in those works fine passages, noble figures, and most expressive heads, but they exhibit neither the linear harmony, the deeply-reasoned arrangement, nor the organised effect, distinguishable in his general style. But in the picture of 'Constantine receiving the Crown from St. Sylvester,' the genius of the great Artist rebounds into the fullness of its stature. This work being placed between windows, attracts less attention than is due to it, nor does the subject, which involves no pathos, excite any stirring interest. But the composition is so grand and perspicuous, and exhibits groups, especially of women and children, of such extraordinary excellence as Raffaelle himself, perhaps, has never surpassed, and no other painter has equalled.

The works of the '*Camarae*' terminate in the great saloon, with the immense picture of the 'Battle of Constantine,' a composition in which the genius of Homer himself seems to have seized the pencil, and to have dashed athwart the canvas the hurricane of battle. But this is no ordinary conflict: here are no marshalled files doing the business of destruction as a mere affair of military duty. Sterner impulses animate the combatants, and the champions of a new faith, and the defenders of the old, encounter each other with all the furious enthusiasm of holy warfare. Each man fights as if avenging some inexpiable wrong, and as if the triumph of his faith depended on his single arm. It were absurd to advert to any previous battle-picture in comparison with this of Raffaelle, nor in any subsequent works of similar subjects, scarcely even in those of Rubens, fiery and impetuous as they are, is there anything which can compete with the fierce reality of this 'Battle of Constantine'—We stand amazed at the invention which has elicited, and the skill which has expressed, such interminable varieties of action. Mingling in every conceivable form of conflict, these indomitable warriors, struck to the ground, entangled among their fallen steeds, wounded and stunned, continue to fight on, returning in their death-struggles blow for blow, and the conflict terminates but with life. Amidst this maddening hurly-burly a tone of Epic dignity is preserved throughout, the composition flows on like a succession of majestic waves, never for a moment halting or jerking; there is no dislocation of lines, no discordant abruptness, for Raffaelle, of all artists,

knew best how to regulate his strength, to give temperance to passion, and smoothness to the whirlwind. Nor could he, amidst this scene of carnage and desperation, omit some redeeming traits of humanity; an aged warrior, who has slain a young standard-bearer, lifts him from the ground with tenderness and commiseration; and Constantine himself, discerning Maxentius, who has been driven into the river, clinging convulsively to the mane of his horse, suspends, in the generous instinct of compassion, his uplifted javelin. Mercy is, with peculiar propriety, made an attribute of the Christian hero, attempering without impairing, the grandeur of his triumph. Emerging through lines of discomfited enemies into the open plain, amidst the clangour of martial music, and surrounded by his gorgeous chivalry, he personifies the ideas of Valour and of Victory. Never, either in verse or colours, has the spectacle of war been shown in such terrible magnificence! The standards of the Conqueror, whereon the Cross surmounts the Roman Eagle, are borne aloft in his van, and attest the triumph of Christianity in this, its last great struggle with expiring Paganism.*

* The Fresco of the 'Battle of Constantine' was executed by Giulio Romano after the Cartoon of Raffaelle, and some writers have, in consequence, made the mistake of describing him as the author of that composition. This artist was a good Architect, and in respect to mere executive power, a skilful painter, but he was no more capable of composing the work in question than of creating the Church of St. Peter. But Giulio Romano was one of those lucky individuals who, dead or alive, 'have greatness thrust upon them.'—Judging from his gross and most exceptionable pictures in the Palazzo T. at Mantua, it is difficult to account for the extravagant panegyrics lavished on him by Du Fresnoy and other writers; he

The histories of men of distinguished genius are so frequently narratives of misfortune, of neglect, or persecution, that it is solacing to turn to such a career as that of Raffaelle, wherein Nature and Fortune seemed to rival each other in lavishing on their favourite their choicest dispensations—No other Artist ever had, or has held, such a position as Raffaelle. Michael Angelo, it is true, received that recognition which his talents extorted, but he was beset with enemies, harassed by opposition, and his whole life was clouded by an atmosphere far different from the pure sunshine which gilded the path of his rival. Raffaelle was yet in the meridian of youthful manhood when he had excited, not only the admiration, but the astonishment of his contemporaries.* His genius indeed was regarded as something

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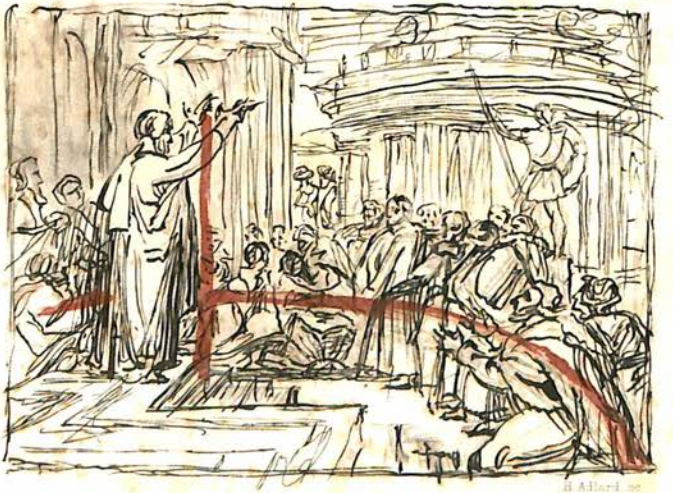
had even the good fortune to obtain a touch of immortality from the pen of Shakespeare, who could, of course, have known nothing of his works except from hearsay—But had our great Bard, with his keen sense of humour, seen the big-headed dwarfs, called giants, whom Giulio Romano has depicted combating the gods in the aforesaid palace, he would scarcely have wished, I think, that this 'rare artist had put breath into his work,' but rather have considered the whole performance as 'laughter for a month, and a good jest for ever.'

* There is, I think, a very prevalent misapprehension in respect to the relative ages of Raffaelle and Michael Angelo. The portraits of the latter were all taken during his old age, those of Raffaelle, of course, while he was young, and hence it is usually inferred that Buonarotti was greatly his senior. But the actual difference of age between them was nine years only. It is singular, considering the usual accuracy of the French School in minor particulars, that Horace Vernet has fallen into this error. In his picture, wherein those great contemporaries are shown on the Scala of the Camarae, Raffaelle appears about the age of twenty-five, Michael Angelo not less than seventy.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

The Diagram here is composed of two diagonal lines, one horizontal & one semi-circular.
The red are the radical lines to which the composition is adjusted.

PAUL PREACHING.



H Allard sc

A perpendicular line and a segment of a circle

divine rather than human, his works less as Art than Inspiration; and it might have been reasonably assumed that, in whatever degree he might add to their quantity, he could never exceed them in excellence. But the genius of Raffaelle was not to be measured by ordinary calculation, nor was it until he had thrown out the sublime Cartoons from the Acts of the Apostles that it was seen in the fullness of its majesty and strength. He evinced in those works, that, so far from having overtasked his faculties in the labours of the Stanzae, he had gone on, during their performance, multiplying his materials, enlarging his style, and aggrandising his grasp of conception. I do not think that, considered singly, the picture of the 'Heliodorus' is surpassed, perhaps equalled, by any of the Cartoons, but looking collectively at the latter, and comparing them with the works in the Vatican, it may I think be safely averred, that if the series of the Stanzae, magnificent and beautiful as they are, had never been executed, the fame of Raffaelle would remain unimpaired, and that the Cartoons alone would be sufficient to maintain his reputation as the greatest Artist whom the world has ever seen—So sustained is the style of these grand compositions, that we are always led to believe that the one immediately before us is the finest. My own predilections, I confess, rest with the 'Paul Preaching'*—Confronting the

* It has been asserted that Raffaelle's figure of 'Paul Preaching' was copied from one of Massaccio, but there is in reality little resemblance between the two figures. Both, it is true, are seen in profile, they stand with their feet parallel, and the drapery is cast something in the same manner; but where, in Massaccio's 'Apostle,'

Temples of the Gods whom it is his mission to subvert, stands the mighty Apostle—The doctrine which he propounds is not an entire novelty; the fine intellect of the Greeks had already inspired them with a dim conception of Deity, superior to their fantastical Mythology; and, led by a sentiment of mysterious reverence, they had erected an altar '*To the Unknown God*'—And what is the announcement made them by this wandering stranger? 'Him declare I unto you!'—Ranged around the Speaker stand the Sages of Greece, the master-spirits of the world, accustomed in this arena to propound their systems—to confer, discuss, assert, confute—But they are not now listening to fanciful speculations, to gladiatorial flights of eloquence, or the wisdom of the schools—They are startled by the amazing assurance that God shall raise the dead!—Nor with light regard, nor with sarcastic scorn, is the sublime revelation received—Pride indeed disdains assent to that which it deems to be impossible, but the messenger of Immortality speaks in tones of no human authority; the souls of his auditors are stirred within them, a chord has been struck which will not be silenced—Deeply they revolve, earnestly they discuss the marvellous doctrine,

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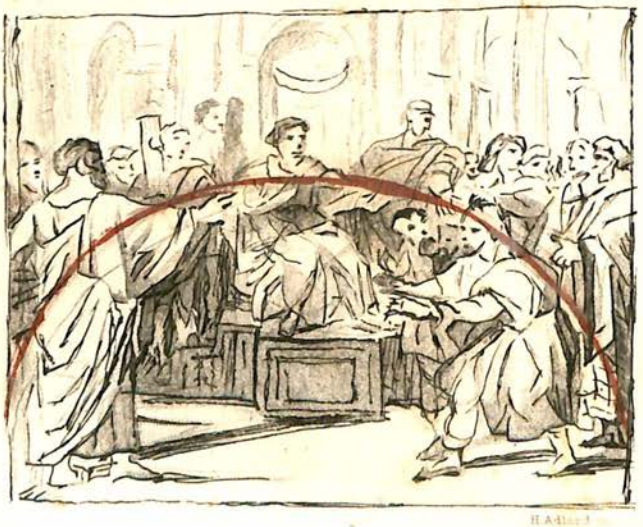
is the aspect of divine authority—the upraised arms, the dissevered lips, the *voice* which, in the 'St. Paul' of Raffaelle, we almost seem to hear resounding through the porticos?

But the figures of Adam and Eve driven from Paradise, Raffaelle has unquestionably copied from Massaccio, and almost without the alteration of a line. He did not hesitate to adopt the idea of another, when it especially suited his purpose, for such, as Reynolds observes, 'was his known wealth, that he could borrow without the imputation of poverty.'

ANANIAS.

A horizontal line, and an inverted semi-circle.

ELYMAS.



A Semi-circle

and if dubious to admit they hesitate to deny it—They determine to 'hear again of this matter.'

It would be superfluous to enter into lengthened and particular notices of works which are immediately under our eyes, and so well known that they may be said to form integral portions of the public mind—The subjects of the Cartoons, selected from a narrative filled with infinite varieties of interest and all the elements of the picturesque—are those which tended most directly to authenticate the Apostolic Mission. The disciples of Christ appear as the delegates of Heaven, exercising alike the functions of mercy and of judgment—They cure by instantaneous miracles the diseased and the impotent; they strike the Sorcerer with blindness, they pronounce the death-doom of Ananias—We are struck, through the whole series, with the singular accordance of style, with the grand simplicity of the text they illustrate—These are evidently no records of merely secular transactions, nor poetic fancies, nor embodiments of airy legends. They are stamped with an impress of Sanctity, and so completely do they identify their subjects, that we find it impossible to dissociate the events from the pictures. They appeal to us, like the Sacred Record, with an evidence of truth so irresistible, that the most determined sceptic might apostrophise the Artist as King Agrippa addressed St. Paul, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.'

We observe, in one particular, a distinct line of demarcation between the works in the Camarae and the Cartoons—The former relate to the History of the Church, the latter to that of Religion. The series of the

Stanzae commences with the Councils of the Fathers, and terminates with the 'Battle of Constantine;' and through the whole range of intermediate subjects, the Pontiff is the perpetual hero—He presides at the overthrow of Heliodorus—He repulses Attila—He discomfits the Saracens—He extinguishes, by his supreme fiat, the flames in the Borgho—He confirms the sovereignty of Charlemagne—He confers the crown on Constantine—and, more than this, wherever a convenient niche can be found, He sits on high, surrounded by ministering Angels, like Deity itself—But it is not thence to be inferred that Raffaelle was guilty of servile adulation, much less of profanity—No one acquainted with his works can imagine for a moment that he was not profoundly devout, and if he believed that the *Dio in terra* of his Church was justly entitled to the attributes of Divinity, he believed no more than, as a good Catholic, he was bound to admit.

In turning from the Frescos of Raffaelle to his works in oils, it is impossible, I think, to dispute the opinion of Reynolds, that in those two modes of practice 'he was not the same man.' Yet who that looks at the 'Transfiguration' would venture to deny that the Artist was a great Painter, even if judged alone by the ordeal of technical skill?—But all things are comparative, and candour must allow that in those qualities which constitute the peculiar charm of the oil-pencil, Raffaelle cannot claim equality with the leading Masters of the Venetian School. This deficiency, if it be admitted, must be charged, I suppose, on his early education, for occasionally we meet with works of his which prove

indisputably that he was neither insensible to the beauties of Venetian style, nor incapable of producing them—I may advert, as a remarkable specimen, to the portrait of Pope Julius II. in the Pitti Palace, of which there is an excellent duplicate in our National Gallery, a work which in the fine qualities of depth, tone, rich *impasta*, and granulated surface, is perfectly Titianesque—Even in the pictures of his boyhood, timid as they are, we discern in the attempt at a lighter touch, and a more silvery tone, a disposition to escape from the hardness and heaviness of his first instructors. His second or middle style of colouring, of which the 'Madonna da Foligno' and the 'St. John in the Wilderness' are beautiful examples, is clear, bright, and harmonious; his third style, bold, decisive, and made up of striking contrasts, betrays occasionally a tendency to redness in the flesh tints, and blackness in the shadows; but these defects have been ascribed to the mutability of his materials. His pictures of this latter period are sometimes deteriorated also by an elaborate smoothness of surface, amounting even to what painters call *horny*: yet in spite of these imperfections, they bear out, wherever seen, with commanding power. The 'Transfiguration' especially, as has been justly observed, strikes us with the grand effect of martial music, a result referable, no doubt, to the distinctness of the colours and the abruptness of its *chiaroscuro*—That sort of harmony, indeed, which is produced by the fusion of light and shade, found no place in the style of Raffaelle, neither did he avail himself of the *nevola che passa*, nor sweep whole sections of his picture into

masses of shadow, in order to concentrate the lights on particular spots. It is assumed by the Masters who adopt this principle, that it tends to round, consolidate, and give vigour to the effect; yet the pictures of Raffaelle, who entirely repudiates the practice, *tell* almost at any distance, with a clearness which not only shows every figure in distinct relief, but renders the intention of the whole obvious and unmistakable. It must be recollected at the same time, that Raffaelle's extreme perspicuity is due, in a considerable degree, to the profound intelligence of his linear arrangements.

In the science of *lines* indeed this great Artist stands absolutely alone—The painters of the *Cinque Cento* were usually Architects, and he was an eminent one; and it is evident, I think, that much of the methodised skill of his composition is referable to his geometrical studies. His grouping is almost invariably adjusted to a few radical lines, forming a simple diagram, which may be said to constitute the ground-plan of the picture. On these lines the figures are arranged, unfolding like laminæ, or the leaves of a flower, but with no want of angular spirit, where angles are wanted. The intervening spaces are left vacant, except by the introduction of a few subordinate objects to prevent the artifice being too apparent. To these vacant spaces may be attributed much of that noble composure by which his works are distinguished. His figures never jostle, jerk, nor are pressed for want of room; indeed, considering the number of incidents and the varieties of action frequently involved, the calmness, dignity, and simpli-

city of the aggregate impression is wonderful. The principle here adverted to, will perhaps be better understood by the annexed linear illustrations.

The works of Raffaelle are emanations of pure intellect; he is, beyond all others, the artist of Reason, and appeals little to our sensuous sympathies. Nor does he indulge in those ambiguous graces, which, founded on no principle, charm us we know not why. He must, on the contrary, be studied to be understood; the comprehension of his genius is too rich a prize to be obtained without effort. He exacts from us no compromise with errors for the sake of beauties; gifted with powers of Imagination prolific beyond example, his rich conceptions are methodised by the severest propriety; he is graceful without affectation, pure without insipidity; his expression, even when touching on the extremes of emotion, never verges on distortion or excess—In composition he is preeminently picturesque, but no sacrifice appears to be made for that object, the picture grows out of the subject, not the subject out of the picture, and the pride of Art and the consciousness of power, are merged in the earnestness of aim with which he strives to carry conviction to the heart of the spectator—In action, although strikingly dramatic, he is the obverse of theatrical; and making no parade of novelty, he is so perpetually original, that throughout the immense range of his compositions, there is not a single instance in which he has repeated himself—Profoundly versed in the learning, he shunned the pedantry of Art; he drew from Grecian Sculpture

its vital principle, but without its immobility, and transferred to his works the august aspects and stately forms of the gods and heroes of antiquity, not as transcripts from stone but as breathing realities—Even his draperies, although arranged with the utmost perfection of classical taste, are free from the slightest tincture of sculpturesque style. The skill evinced and the difficulty surmounted by Raffaelle in these fine distinctions, is scarcely to be understood, except by comparing his practice with that of other men, and especially with the works of recent schools—David and his disciples were not weak artists, but what was the result of their attempt to ennoble painting by impressing on it the grand austerity of sculpture? They filled their canvasses with coloured petrifactions and marble dolls, not perceiving the error, so well understood by Raffaelle, of endeavouring to regulate one Art by the principles of another.

Were it possible that the works of this great Master could be lost, or had they never existed, what a chasm would be left in the world of Art!—It is, I believe, a very general impression among painters, that in the great qualities of composition, character, and expression, although occasional hints may be drawn from other practitioners, he alone is worth consulting as a permanent guide and model—When we glance at the various styles elicited since his time, what a chaos do we encounter!—How has History been disfigured by whims and travesties; the most sacred subjects made mere vehicles for picturesque effect; dressed up in the resuscitated rags of mediæval barbarity—or worse than

all, sunk into the methodised inanity which marks the eras of Academies! From this wilderness of misplaced labours and perverted tastes, with what solace do we turn to the noble creations of Raffaelle, recognising in them, at once, the beacons and the landmarks of Art!—He was largely imbued with fancy as well as with imagination, and had he remitted more frequently his labours in Scriptural history, he might, no doubt, have made rich contributions to the field of miscellaneous Art; yet it must be admitted that the beautiful Galatea, the designs from the story of Psyche, and the mythological groups from the same subject in the Farnesina, are wholly inferior in artistic merit to his compositions from Holy Writ—In that sphere alone his mind found its congenial element, and it is an ennobling circumstance to Art, that the genius of the greatest painter who has ever appeared, was devoted to the most exalted of purposes, the illustration of sacred truth and the service of religion.

The Italian writers* are somewhat too apt to lavish on their Artists, as Homer on his heroes, the title of *divine*; but could that epithet be justified by any

* Vasari was very prolix and exceedingly inaccurate, but were his faults quadrupled, they might all be forgiven for the beautiful and affectionate testimony which he has left of the personal character of Raffaelle, independently of his claims as an Artist. Adverting to the great and universal estimation accorded to him, he says: 'And this happened because all were surpassed by him in friendly courtesy, as well as in Art, all confessed the influence of his sweet and gracious nature, which was so replete with excellence, and so perfect in all the charities, that not only was he honoured by men, but even by the very animals, which would constantly follow his steps, and always loved him.'

application to Humanity, it might surely be conferred on Raffaelle. It is scarcely possible to regard him, except as a bright intelligence, delegated on an especial mission; and it was part of his auspicious destiny to escape the condition usually annexed to a course of great achievements—the labour of protracted years.—He accomplished his task before age had chilled the fervour of early enthusiasm, or dimmed the lustre of his glorious inspirations.*

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* Invaluable service would be rendered to our Arts, could copies be procured (in oils, and of the full size) of the works in the Camarae before decay shall have made still more fatal progress in obliterating the originals—Artists might no doubt be found competent and willing to undertake the task, and, amidst the lavish disbursements of the State, for all possible purposes, how well might a few thousands be expended on this!

TITIAN.

TITIAN.

TITIAN was, of all Colourists, the greatest master of generalisation—One of the leading characteristics of great works of Art is that singleness and simplicity of effect which makes them appear as if they had been the spontaneous product of the Artist's mind. We think no more of the complicated science evolved in the forms of Raffaelle, than of the anatomy of a human figure when seen in graceful motion. Similar impressions we receive from the colouring of Titian, but so entirely free are his works from monotony, that his style is another word for all that is rich, vivid, and magnificent in colouring; yet glorious as it is, made up of brilliant contrasts, and combining the last degree of depth and tone with freshness and vivacity, it is so graduated to the modesty of nature that a thought of the painter's palette never disturbs the illusion. Rubens, Tintoretto, Paolo Veronese, were all proud of their execution, what painter is not? except Titian himself, the track of whose pencil is rarely discernible. If 'Nature,' as it has been gracefully observed, 'unveiled herself to his eye with dignified familiarity,' he never boasts of her favours. With this intense truth, and apparent simplicity, Titian is, of all masters, the most

difficult of imitation; the methodised splendour of Rubens, the silver purity of Vandyke, even Correggio's undulating tones, have each been transmitted by their scholars and admirers with more or less success; but I do not recollect an instance in which the imitation of Titian has ended in anything else than egregious failure. His golden lights degenerate into brass or saffron, warmth kindles into heat, insipid sameness takes the place of simplicity, and his deep transparent shadows are substituted by the opacity of bricks and the hues of mahogany. Mengs observes of the pictures of Titian at Madrid, that he felt, each time that he looked at them, as if he had never seen them before. This impression, common in a certain extent perhaps, to the works of all great masters, belongs in a peculiar degree to those of Titian; the *internal light*, so much talked of, and so little understood, is with him no fable; it appears as if a fountain of splendour was perpetually welling up from beneath the surface of his pictures, diffusing over them an occult and undying irradiation. In the midst of this brilliancy, the works of Titian are low in tone, his brightest lights being almost subdued to half-tint. The difference between the mere commonplace and the scientific idea of brilliancy may be best understood by comparison, and we have numerous instances in our National Gallery which will clearly illustrate the distinction. Let the 'Ganymede' or the 'Bacchus and Ariadne' of Titian, for example, be compared with the 'Six Saints' by Francia—This last picture, considered in reference to tints mixed on the palette, is brighter than those of Titian, but taking the different

effects of colour in their whole combination, there is no one, I think, who would not turn with dislike from the one, and with delight to the other.

There is no point in which Titian and Correggio are so distinctly opposed as in their treatment of *chiaro-scuro*. Titian is cautious of reflections, Correggio revels in them; they form the main element of his style, contributing beyond any other quality to those dreamy and poetic effects by which his works are distinguished. Titian has less of this visionary charm, but he has more of absolute truth, not of truth in its homely acceptation, but as it is seen refined and spiritualised by the alchemy of genius.

In comparing Titian with the great Artists of the Roman and Florentine Schools, it has been usual to describe him as the painter of physical humanity, while to those Masters has been ascribed the loftier and exclusive prerogative of depicting the mind and passions. But this opinion must be received with *considerable* qualification. Considered in reference to grand exhibitions of sentiment and character, pursued through almost interminable developments, the works of the Vatican assuredly preclude all rivalry. But if single pictures may be adduced, proving, by the concentration of various excellences, what Art is capable of accomplishing, I know not where such examples should be sought, if not amongst the works of Titian. His celebrated 'Pietro Martyre' exhibits, in combination with his own unrivalled colouring, the majesty of epic, and the pathos of dramatic style—The scene is filled with tempestuous action, from the Assassin who darts like a

flash of lightning on his prey, and prepares to dispatch the victim whom he has hurled to the ground, to the flying Friar, who with eyes distended and limbs outstretched into headlong speed endeavours to escape. Terror is not an idea which assimilates with dignity, yet this figure, designed in the noblest contours and towering over the horizon, is in the highest degree grand and imposing. The background, formed of vast and shadowy forest trees, furnishes a fit scene for the perpetration of such a tragedy, attesting with what skill the Artist adjusted his accessories to the sentiment of his subject, and at the same time sustaining his reputation as one of the greatest of Landscape-painters.

The immense picture of the 'Ascension of the Virgin,' in the *Academia degli Belli Arti* at Venice, is another instance wherein the greatest qualities of Art are combined in the same performance.* The Virgin, who ascends to Heaven in a blaze of glory, is sustained and surrounded by Angels of ineffable beauty, and the disciples who gaze on her from below are personifications of Apostolic grandeur. This picture has been asserted by competent judges to be the most magnificent effect of colours ever set on canvas. It is badly placed in the Gallery in respect to light, but when illuminated by the setting sun, it bears out with a splendour which

* This picture of the 'Ascension of the Virgin,' it may not be unimportant to remark, had become so obscured by the smoke of incense and other causes in the church where it had hung, that it was usually believed to have been executed in bistre. But on being removed to the public gallery, it was restored at once to its original and present state, simply by being rubbed with bread.

seems to emanate from no earthly materials—Madrid perhaps can alone compete with Venice in the number it contains of the finest pictures of Titian. The Emperor Charles V., whose inherent taste neither war nor politics were able to extinguish, eagerly accumulated the works of the Painter whose genius he idolised; he considered them to add new lustre to the splendours of his reign, and they formed, after his abdication, the chief solace of his retirement.

Nor was Titian, in design and conception, less original than in his style of colouring. No one would ascribe his 'Peter Martyr'* to Raffaelle, nor his 'Prometheus' to Michael Angelo, although these works might compete in grandeur of treatment with either of these Masters. Even in subjects of lighter character, fabulous or allegorical, his peculiar feeling is always perceptible. If the composition of the 'Human and Divine Love' (in the Borghese Palace at Rome) were shown to us for the first time in simple outline, we should at once pronounce it to be the work of Titian. While adverting to this picture, it is impossible to forbear remarking on its consummate excellence; it is one of the few specimens which exhibit the master in his primitive and unimpaired splendour, confirming and realising all that we have seen or heard, or read of his matchless

* It will not impair our interest in Titian's picture, although it diminishes our sympathy for the hero of it, to remember that this *Pietro Martyre* (who must not be confounded with the Apostle) was a remorseless bigot and Inquisitor, that at the time of his assassination he was travelling as the agent of a sanguinary persecution, and that, had his fate been legally inflicted, he had richly deserved it.

colouring—The sentiment, too, expressed in the Allegory is beautiful, although not quite so obvious, perhaps, as that in the 'Three Stages of Human Life' (in the collection of the Earl of Ellesmere). In the latter he has remitted something of his golden glow, substituting a more silvery tone, but of exquisite purity. This picture is a delightful play of fancy, and illustrates its subject with the graceful simplicity of a classic pastoral.

The portraits of Titian have been said to reflect their prototypes with the accuracy of a mirror, but this, if meant for panegyric, is insufficient for its purpose. His canvas presents not merely the external, but the internal man. We almost forget the perfection of the physical representation in the intense impression of mind and character—The picture of 'The Armed Doge in the Antechamber of the Council of Ten,' and that of 'The Pesaro Family returning Thanks to the Virgin for a Victory over the Turks,' in the Church of the Frati, at Venice, may be cited, among others, as noble specimens of Portrait in association with History.

Among the sweeping denunciations levelled against the Venetian School, on the ground of incorrect design, Titian has not escaped—Mengs considers him to be unacquainted with the Antique. Fresnoy was of opinion that his male figures were very imperfect. Vasari brings to bear upon him the formidable artillery of Buonarotti himself. He informs us, that he accompanied Michael Angelo on a visit to Titian, who they found occupied on the picture of 'Danaë' (now at Naples). Buonarotti paid his great contemporary many compliments, '*per courtesia*,' saith Vasari; but coming

away, he launched out a little (*al solito*) on his deficiencies, deploring the imperfect education of the Venetians, but adding that if Titian had been a better draughtsman, no one could have excelled him. This anecdote, if it answers no other purpose, may serve to show with what caution we should resign our judgments to verbal descriptions of painting. The picture of 'Danaë,' thus stigmatised, is one of the most beautiful impersonations of female loveliness ever set on canvas. It provokes a smile to compare it with the gigantic Sybils and Prophetesses in the Sistine Chapel—Those figures are grand and terrible, and just fitted for the places they occupy; but they differ widely from the forms of actual Nature, and form no fit medium for the representation of Beauty—Vasari, after all, was a desperate partisan, and the opinions he has put into the mouth of Michael Angelo were probably his own. I mean not to accuse him of deliberate falsehood, but he wrote with unscrupulous haste, and his memory was notoriously imperfect.

Whatever be the rank accorded to Titian in respect to his contemporaries of other schools, he had certainly no equal in his own, and this is much to say, in an era which could boast such artists as Tintoretto and Paolo Veronese. These were indeed great painters, gifted with extraordinary faculties of invention, and vast executive powers; but with this difference, that while the one seemed to draw his resources entirely from within, the other sought them entirely from without. Tintoretto worked with an impetuosity which scarcely left him time to look at Nature; Paul Veronese was unable to

stir a step except in her company—The consequence is, that the works of the latter are inveterately local. There is a picture by some Dutch artist wherein Mark Anthony takes tea with Cleopatra, who has a map of Amsterdam over her mantelpiece; nor is the anachronism more ridiculous than many in the works of Paul Veronese. The 'Queen of Sheba visiting Solomon,' 'Alexander receiving the Family of Darius,' 'Pharaoh's Daughter finding Moses,' 'Virginius Stabbing his Daughter,' are all unmistakably Venetians, arrayed not only in the costumes of their country, but in the fashions of the day. An occasional dash of Orientalism adds to the grotesqueness; and the bewildering phantasmagoria of splendid accoutrements—of silks, velvets, and brocades—of gold, gems, and embroidery, furnish the exact medium for those gorgeous effects in which the painter delighted—Living in the palmy days of Venice, his taste was probably formed on the splendid pageants common to the period, and accordingly, whether the incidents he describes belong to high or humble life, he arrays them all in the same inflexible magnificence. The vast picture of the 'Marriage of Cana' (at the Louvre) represents nothing less than an Imperial banquet; one only wonders that at so pompous a feast, a due supply of wine could have been possibly forgotten. And this picture is the type of his style. He invites us to princely entertainments; he inducts us into spacious halls, superb with columns of many-coloured marbles, liveried attendants glide obsequiously over mosaic floors, musicians perform in the Galleries, and discerned through the open porticos,

similar edifices stretch away into distant perspective, echoing, as it were, the grandeur of the foreground; banners float from terraces, balconies are filled with festive groups, the whole scene is redolent of pomp and luxury, and has the air of some great festival or national rejoicing—Such was the style which Paolo Veronese felt to be his *forte*, and which he exercised accordingly; and were his faults (if his peculiarities are to be so designated) of much greater magnitude, his practical merits are quite sufficient to redeem them. Amidst the complexity of objects involved in his vast compositions, his execution glides along with a beautiful fluency at once serene and brilliant, like the current of a limpid river; and his colour, which is an effusion of silvery splendour, is another word for purity itself.

Tintoretto, assuredly, cannot be accused of turning his contemporaries into Historic personages, nor indeed to have been indebted to models of any sort, except such as were supplied by his own effervescent fancy: But if less local than Paolo, he was equally regardless of fact and probability. To depict an event, or, in Artistic language, to *tell his story*, as it might possibly have happened, formed no part of his style; his aim was to startle with novelty, to dazzle with grand eccentricities; and with this purpose he discarded all the etiquette of Art, and flung about his groups in wild promiscuous revelry. His principal figures were made subordinate, his subordinate principal, and either, or both, were pushed into light or absorbed into shade, just as accident suggested, or the exigencies of effect happened to demand. It was wholly immaterial to

Tintoretto whether his subject demanded one figure or a thousand, he preferred the latter; and never seems so completely at home as in such subjects as the 'Battle of Lepanto,' the 'Miracle of Feeding the Multitude,' or the 'Last Judgment'—Even in the 'Annunciation,' which should properly be limited to two figures, the Angel who salutes the Virgin, sweeps through the window accompanied by a legion of Cherubs with the rush of a whirlwind. Impetuous energy was indeed the characteristic of Tintoretto. His execution, disdaining toil and leaping over difficulty, dashes through his labyrinths of forms, flashing and foaming like an angry torrent. There is in this exhibition of power something allied to grandeur, but it frequently evinces a levity suggestive of anything but grave impressions. His composition of the 'Slaughter of the Innocents' might lead one to think that he had set up his easel in a ball-room, sketched the whirling figures as they passed, and occasionally taken a turn himself in the mazes of the dance. But the faults of Tintoretto are those of exuberance, not of deficiency; he was called *Il Robusto*, and certainly his extravagances were of a kind which could only be committed by genius of an athletic order. His great series of works in the School of St. Rocco at Venice, exhibits a fertility of conception, and novelties of light and shadow, which excite delight and surprise, and lead to the conviction that had his powers been disciplined by a severer judgment, he would have had few superiors in Art. And some works he has left which fully bear out that assumption. His 'Martyrdom of the Slave,' which hangs opposite

the 'Ascension of the Virgin' by Titian, scarcely blenches beneath that formidable comparison. In the 'Transportation of the Body of St. Mark,' he has expressed with poetic felicity the supernatural character of the tempest which bursts on the flying groups, and the great work of the 'Crucifixion' evinces a still finer perception of the sentiment of *chiaroscuro*. The whole picture is enveloped in a solemn twilight, resembling that which precedes an eclipse, or might announce an earthquake, and which seems a fit prelude to that awful darkness, 'which overshadowed the whole earth.'

The names of Giorgone, Pordenone, Paris Bordone, and Leandro Bassano, must be numbered among the luminaries of the Venetian School. Giorgone had, at least, the merit of suggesting that style of colour which Titian developed into such supreme perfection. Pordenone was an Artist who among less extraordinary competitors might have become the leader of a school. Paris Bordone, had he painted no other picture than that of the 'Fisherman presenting the Ring to the Doge,' would have established the character of a Painter accomplished in every fine quality of Art.

On what grounds then does Titian, amongst such rivals, rest his claim not only to positive, but to immense superiority? This, I think, must be referred to that power of generalisation to which I have adverted as his leading characteristic, to that faculty, which, rejecting whatever is minute, accidental or peculiar, recognises Nature only in her noblest developments. There are painters who have sought and obtained reputation by brilliant eccentricity, beautiful caprices, nay by

splendid errors—But the element of Titian is truth, without which, in Art as well as in morals, all other excellence is vanity—Gorgeous in *style*, he is wholly superior to *manner*; his colouring betrays no manœuvres of process, his execution is untainted with *bravura*, he condescends to no small artifice, or meretricious attraction; he shuns scintillations, he has few salient points; other artists sparkle, but Titian *shines*. His style, although so broadly generalised, is based nevertheless on selection, he sought his effects only at those hours which conduce most to picturesque splendour; he reflects not the cold brilliancy of morning, nor the colourless radiance of meridian day—but he drew his tones from the golden glory of the summer sunset. It is then, when details are merged into masses, crudeness is blent into warmth, and glare attempered into harmony, that Nature appears in the perfection of her pomp and her beauty—And such is the aspect of Art, such its regulated magnificence, as exhibited by the genius of Titian.

Strange as it may appear, this great Painter is at present no favourite in the Art-Institutions of Europe! The Venetian School, in fact, is out of fashion, and accordingly, the works of Titian, its great representative, are usually consigned to the worst places which can be found for them. We see them continually hung on dark panels, opposite windows, or next the ceilings. These indignities we might endure patiently, hoping for better times, while the works themselves are left uninjured. But direr enemies than tasteless Curators, the Cleaner and the Restorer, follow close on the track of Titian;

led, like vampires, by their diabolical instincts, to prey with peculiar delight on whatever is most cherished and beautiful, and frequently, even among *his* works, selecting the best—Some instances occur to me, which, to those who knew the original pictures previously to their defacement, must be a subject of poignant regret. The very beautiful portrait called 'Titian's Daughter,' so idolised during its sojourn in the Louvre, and previously, and long since, the brightest ornament of the Pitti Palace at Florence, was, without the slightest necessity (being in the best condition), taken from the walls, and stretched, ironed, puttyed, scoured, and stippled; from which barbarous inflictions it emerged, as might have been expected, resembling either the ghost, or the dead body of its former self. The celebrated picture of the 'Tribute Money,' at Dresden, has been exposed to similar treatment; and now exhibits, instead of the genial warmth of Titian, a grey chilly effect, resembling one of the coldest of Guido. In the Gallery of the Belvedere at Vienna, the Restorer has stepped in to complete the work of the Cleaner, and Titian has received his *coup-de-grace* as effectually as a criminal on the wheel—Fresh whity-blue skies have been plastered over his ethereal backgrounds, effacing from them every trace of atmosphere, and embedding, instead of relieving the figures which they surround; the graduated harmony of the Master being converted into glaring discord. But it is at the headquarters of Art, in the Vatican itself, that we must look for the proudest triumph of pictorial barbarism. The grand picture by Titian called 'St. Sebastian' (so nominated

from the principal figure, which is cited by Sir Joshua Reynolds for its superlative colouring) was semicircular at the top, and this semicircle was irradiated by the glory effused round the Virgin, giving splendour to the effect, and balancing by its warmth, the cold hues in the other parts of the picture. But Titian's scheme of colour imported little to the accomplished Curators, who, wishing to adjust the picture to a square compartment, made no scruple of cutting off the top of it, not perceiving, in the profundity of their ignorance, that the picture was thereby virtually destroyed—I know not whether these accounts of the defacements and mutilation of great works of Art abroad may afford any triumph to our picture-butchers at home. If so, I leave them to the full enjoyment of it; meanwhile I venture to admonish the possessors of the priceless works of Titian, whether Communities or Individuals, that unless more care be taken of them, than has latterly been manifested, the style of this great Artist will, at no distant time, become as mere a tradition as that of Apelles or of Zeuxis.

In connection with the foregoing topic, I have to state the deplorable fact, that the celebrated picture of Raffaelle at Bologna, the beautiful 'St. Cecilia,' has been added to the list of great works utterly disfigured by the processes of Cleaning and Restoring. I first saw this picture in 1823, it was then in the finest preservation, but at present I do not think that there is a square inch

of the surface, except in the space occupied by the musical instruments in the foreground, which has not been buried beneath the daubing and mud, heaped upon it by the brutal operator. It is in fact no longer distinguishable from any of the black disgusting copies of it dispersed throughout Europe. Can no penal enactment be devised which might reach the perpetrators of those inexpiable outrages?

CORREGGIO.

CORREGGIO.

In the whole range of Art there is nothing in my opinion, which, in its first impression as seen from the floor, inflicts such disappointment as the Duomo at Parma. If the demon of perversity had been tasked to embarrass the genius of an Artist, it could not have accomplished that purpose more effectually than in the difficulties opposed to Correggio in this renowned Cupola. Not only is its elevation so great as almost to baffle the power of vision, but the Cupola itself is intersected by windows which, admitting the light in all directions, preclude the possibility, not only of analysing the work, but of seeing it with tolerable distinctness. The question naturally arises, with what inducement could the Artist have undertaken a task fraught with such formidable difficulties? It may be answered, that the opportunity of exercising his powers on so vast a scale, was a great and inspiring one; and perhaps, like a young and heroic champion who encounters a gigantic adversary, he rushed into the combat, disdaining all hazards in the confidence of victory—Nor was there on the part of Correggio any miscalculation of his own strength—Where he fails, if such a term may apply to him, it is from no deficiency in himself, but from obstacles radically insurmountable.

The 'Ascension of the Virgin' has been a perpetual subject with the Catholic painters, but which among them has approached the magnificent idea of Correggio? He imagines the Octagon beneath the Dome to contain the tomb of the Virgin; hence she has arisen, and escorted by Angels and received by the Celestial Hierarchies, she ascends into her eternal home—Far beneath, and around the balustrade of the Cupola, stand the Apostles, gazing on the celestial vision in adoration and astonishment; and in the arches below, appear the patron Saints of Parma, attended, like the Apostles, by ministering Spirits—Such is the outline of this grand design; but it is impossible to examine it so as to form an adequate conception of its merits, without ascending the interior scala, and viewing it from the apertures which open midway into the Dome.

And here it is that the genius of Correggio bursts upon us, if not in the fullness of it primitive splendour, at least with a development quite sufficient to satisfy us that the lavish panegyrics bestowed on it by earlier criticism were neither exaggerated nor misplaced—It might be inferred by those pre-accustomed to the contemplation of the Sistine Chapel, that the style of Buonarotti *alone* could give efficiency to works on so vast a scale, but the Duomo discloses a creation which, if less awe-inspiring, evolves in such combinations of harmony and grace as seem to *disdain* the severities of Art. Yet the bright beings who float and shine in this vision of Heaven are no airy abstractions. Painting, however poetical, has to deal with organic forms, and Correggio, if less profoundly versed in the science of the

human figure than the great Florentine, had enough of that knowledge to meet with spontaneous facility the requirements of his Art. His principles of design, like those of the Phidian Marbles, express all that is essential, whether to character or action, but without ostentation of skill. He accomplishes the rare union of the actual and the imaginary, and embodies in shapes of tangible truth, his conceptions of visionary grace and ideal beauty—He evinces in his style of execution a masculine power which contrasts singularly with the almost feminine suavity of his genius, and in the boldness, nay, the audacity of his foreshortenings, he sports with difficulty like a giant triumphing in the consciousness of immeasurable strength—Of all Painters, he is the greatest Master of Space; he flings around his beatified groups an atmosphere which seems to deepen into infinitude, the Dome expands before his pencil, and the Virgin, although at its summit, appears still to be ascending.

In no part of his work had he to encounter a greater difficulty than in reconciling the gigantic stature of his Angels with impressions of loveliness and grace—Vast dimensions assimilate with grandeur, but are somewhat incompatible with elegance, yet the theory which asserts that smallness is an element indispensable to beauty, is confuted by the works of Correggio. Nothing in Art is more captivating than his towering Seraphs and colossal Cherubs, who, revelling in their Elysian Jubilee, salute us from every cloud with looks of benignant yet almost childlike sweetness.

I dissent from the frequently-repeated opinion that

in the circle of Angels which surrounds the Virgin, there is too great an obtrusion of arms and legs. The fact is, that these groups are so closely interlaced as to resemble, at a certain distance, a garland of flowers, and might have had the appearance of a compactness not altogether ethereal but for those buoyant limbs, which, struck freely into the air, give an idea of elasticity and distinctness—It may not be easy, in some instances, to trace those volant members immediately to their owners, but this is of little importance, and who, amidst such a blaze of excellence, can give attention to such details?

It is singular that Correggio, all-powerful as he was in the science of *chiaroscuro*, has in this great work rather shunned than sought the direct juxta-position of light and shadow. Lights there are indeed, which break like sudden sunshine on heads and limbs and clouds and drapery, but these gleams are sparingly admitted, nor can the masses of shade which float as if thrown by passing clouds over the whole composition, be said to do the office of shadow, since they neither tend to obscure, nor even to neutralise the general splendour; they are, on the contrary, so illuminated by reflections that they almost eclipse in their brilliancy the quality of light. The effect thus induced is solemn and sublime; we gaze on a spectacle strangely indefinite, but distinct and beautiful; a mysterious vision, yet a glorious reality.

Too visionary, alas, is this bright creation of Correggio! Overtaken by the inevitable fate of Fresco, it is fast fading away; some portions are obliterated,

and others have fallen from the walls; but quite enough remains to attest its original splendour, and to excite amazement at the injustice done the Artist by his tasteless clients, who, in the coarse contempt they expressed for his performance, gibbeted themselves to everlasting derision—It was not possible, however, that much time could elapse before public opinion was awakened to a just estimate of such a painter; and subsequent criticism has almost exhausted the power of panegyric in giving expression to its admiration—But the highest testimony accorded to Correggio, one indeed which supersedes all others, he received from a contemporary: no less than Titian himself, who, visiting the Duomo, while he was yet fresh from the inspection of the Vatican, expressed his astonishment at such unanticipated excellence, exclaiming, with generous candour, 'Were I not Titian, I would be Correggio.'

The second great work in Fresco by Correggio, at Parma, is in the Church of San Giovanni. Whatever be the difficulties opposed to an adequate view of the works of the Duomo, are here increased in an insurmountable degree. The Cupola of this Church presents a mass of darkness which no vision can penetrate, and as no facilities are afforded for a nearer inspection than the floor, I am at a loss to understand from what source the florid descriptions given of it by recent travellers were derived—Another Fresco by Correggio, painted for the Baptistry of this Church, was demolished to make way for the enlargement of the building—The precaution however was taken of having it copied, conjointly by Agostino Caracci and Artuzzi, and the

copy happily is excellent. The groups of Cherubs on each side of the Christ and the Virgin, are those of which there are *replicas* in our National Gallery—These last, I regret to say, are not successful; they reflect nothing of Correggio but a certain largeness and breadth which it would be difficult altogether to miss in copying such a Master, but they are utterly deficient in that beauty which no doubt characterised the originals, and which is well preserved in the copies at San Giovanni.*

Correggio is the mystery of Art—It has been continually inquired, on what sub-structure did he erect his style, who were his instructors, whence were his principles educed? There is not the slightest proof, either from written testimony or the internal evidence of style, that he had ever visited Rome, Venice, or Florence. Yet he starts up, unknown, and for awhile unrecognised, wielding all the elements of Art, and at once the rival of Michael Angelo, of Raffaelle, and of Titian—In one particular he stands alone; he evinces equal mastery, whether in oil or in Fresco. Michael Angelo employed the oil-pencil so little that we scarcely recognise him as a practitioner in that class of Art; the reputation also of Raffaelle rests mainly on his

* As far as the style of Correggio may be transmitted by Engraving, that object will be accomplished by the beautiful series of Plates commenced by Raimondi, and now in progress of completion by Toschi. During a recent visit to Parma, I was kindly permitted to see the Drawings made for this work from the originals at the Studio of that Artist. They were admirably executed, reflecting not only the general effect of the Frescos, but rendering details, which except from the Draughtsman's platform (attached to the Dome) it would have been impossible to distinguish.

Frescos; while that of Titian is almost exclusively associated with his works in oils—But Correggio is alike pre-eminent in either style—It is astonishing to see with what ductility the pencil which sweeps with such amazing power through his mighty Cupolas, adjusts itself, not only to the refinements of Easel, but to the delicacy of Cabinet pictures. Even in this latter class, his accustomed breadth is never remitted; the smallest of them is as grand in *style* as his works in the Duomo, while in execution they equal, perhaps excel, whatever there is of juice, pulp, surface, and *impasta* in the subsequent works of the Dutch or Flemish Schools. In respect to Correggio's larger works in oil, but one word need be said: they are unequalled except by those of Titian; nay, there are some among them, I had almost said, of such absolute perfection as to admit of no rivalry whatever—Nevertheless, I do not presume to impeach the universal verdict which has assigned to Titian the character of the greatest of Colourists; the painter *par excellence* of terrestrial nature; but if Titian dominates on earth, Correggio has stolen a glance from Heaven, and invested the beings he has transferred to his canvas with hues of unspeakable beauty. That *dictum* of criticism, however, which while it concedes to Titian supremacy in Colour, assigns to Correggio exclusively the palm of Harmony, has in it, assuredly, more of method than of accuracy; Titian is so great a Master of Harmony that it seems almost absurd to assert that anyone can surpass him, it forms an integral part of his matchless colouring. Correggio's peculiar charm might, in my opinion, be better expressed by the term

Melody—something as in Music not indeed distinct from Harmony, but beyond it, and fraught with more deep and delicious emotion. The spectator who for the first time sees one of Correggio's finest works, is certainly struck with an impression that he witnesses something more beautiful than he had ever seen before; and such is the feeling expressed by Annibale Caracci, in a letter to his cousin Ludivico. 'Before I had seen the pictures of Correggio,' he says, 'I had no idea of what perfection Art is capable—You know how much I admired the "St. Cecilia" of Raffaelle; I considered it to be almost a miracle, but, *per Dio*, after having seen the "St. Jerome" of Correggio, Raffaelle's picture appears to me to be little better than a collection of tobacco-pipes'—Now really one cannot go quite this length with Annibale; The 'St. Cecilia' of Raffaelle, it is grievous to say, WAS * a most divine performance, and ought not, under any possible comparison to have been spoken of thus irreverently; but the letter of Annibale is conclusive as to the effect produced on his mind by the works of Correggio; and it is the more extraordinary when one recollects that his own style, and that of the School which he founded, were severely Academic. It could scarcely have been expected, that a mind thus disciplined, would have manifested such deep sensibility to that delicate, ethereal, and unacademic beauty which is the distinguishing character of Correggio.

Whether it be possible to analyse the style of this

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* See concluding paragraph of the article on Titian.

Painter or not, Fuseli has attempted to *define* it with compendious brevity. 'The bland central light of a globe,' he says, 'imperceptibly gliding through lucid demi-tints into rich reflected shades, composes the spell of Correggio.' But what is meant by this? Are we to infer that the whole of his works are adjusted to one scheme of *chiaroscuro*? Fuseli's definition, in my opinion, describes more accurately the style of Rembrandt: I do not perceive that this intense concentration of light and shadow has ever been employed by Correggio, unless when suggested by the subject. In Rembrandt it is the principle, in Correggio the incident. But whenever the latter did choose to adopt it, he used it with a felicity approaching to inspiration. In the celebrated 'Nativity,' the beautiful invention by which the new-born Infant is made to irradiate the whole picture, has been continually and justly adduced as the most splendid example of *chiaroscuro* extant, whether in relation to sentiment or to picturesque effect. The picture of 'Christ's Agony in the Garden' is another instance. The Saviour is kneeling, the image of isolated and suffering virtue; no light appears except the halo which surrounds the Divine countenance; it illuminates the ministering Angel, but is insufficient to dissipate the gloom beyond, where all is mystery and sadness, and where, in the dim distance, His friends are seen slumbering, while His enemies pursue, and His disciple betrays Him!—If to these two pictures we add the 'Reading Magdalene,' that gem of inexpressible beauty, I have, I think, enumerated all the pictures which Correggio has constructed on this principle. In general his lights are

as widely diffused as those of Titian, and so far from being conducted in unbroken gradations, are frequently intercepted by passages of intense darkness, sometimes of the deepest blue. If Correggio's harmony may be analysed at all, it might be described perhaps, to consist in his lavish use of reflexions, which, however, are so skilfully managed as not to impair the solidity of the figures; in his exquisite distribution of neutral hues and semi-tones, by which the brighter colours are balanced and chastened; and above all, by that fine diaphanous medium, whatever it may be called, which seems to float over his works, inducing a sensation of what I have ventured to call Melody—His shadows, perhaps, are not quite so transparent, nor so purely negative as those of Titian; his surface is not so finely granulated, nor is his touch quite so crisp: his execution, nevertheless, has an inimitable charm; and the creamy richness of his *impasta*, and the pulpy sweetness with which his heads are modelled, are to the eye of taste delicious. A great modern poet has thought fit to set up an unnecessary defence of a very beautiful line descriptive of one of his heroines—

> The mind, the music breathing from her face:

yet Lord Byron must surely have known, that to those who were unable to comprehend that line, it was useless to explain it; and equally inexplicable, perhaps, except to the instincts of taste and feeling, are 'the mind and the music' which breathe from the pictures of Correggio.

The great Artists of the Cinque Cento were strongly contra-distinguished in their orders of genius. There

was, however, between Raffaelle and Correggio a considerable affinity in all which relates to harmony of lines and sweetness of expression. But here the similitude stops. To Raffaelle's universality Correggio had no claim. Depicting with intuitive felicity the gentler classes of emotion, he has no language for the sterner passions. The Executioner who dispatches Santa Placida seems to want nerve for his terrible office—the soldier who derides Christ testifies pity rather than malignity—Even Pilate on the Judgment-seat manifests nothing of the authority of a Judge—A deficiency like this, it must be admitted, derogates from the character of a perfect painter, whose office it is to transmit with equal accuracy *all* the traits of mind, and *all* the phases of feeling—Yet to this peculiar structure of mind we owe, perhaps, the grace and tenderness which characterise the pictures of Correggio; his proper sphere was that of Angels and Saints and Madonnas; or if, occasionally, he strayed among the luxuriant *myths* of the Greek Mythology, his mind was too pure to be long tolerant of that voluptuous atmosphere. It is remarkable that his pictures from the fables of Danaë and Leda and Io are painted with less than his usual warmth of tone; it would almost appear that he had intended to qualify the sentiment involved in those subjects, by imparting to them something of the colourless purity of sculpture.

But the most striking contrast of Artistic powers is that between Correggio and Michael Angelo—Here were two men, contemporaries, both of vast ability, and executing great works in the service of the Church;

in moral constitution they were not dissimilar—pious, temperate, and intensely devoted to their Art. But such was the difference of their mental temperaments, so vast the discrepancy in their styles of genius, that they scarcely appear to have exercised the same Art, or, indeed, to have been beings of the same world. Absolute Monarchs in their separate domains, the one rules by love, the other by terror; but neither possessed the double key which gave to Dante and to Milton, access alike to the bowers of Paradise or to the gulfs of Tartarus—Correggio's aspirations are all heavenward; he delights to mingle in the communion of the blessed, to expatiate amidst visions of grace and love and beauty—But the stern instincts of Michael Angelo trend in an opposite direction; his province it is to grapple with terror and despair, to descend into abysses where hope comes not; to gaze on the penalties of inexpiable sin!—Correggio invests Religion with her attributes of mercy and beneficence, but Buonarotti arrays her in the terrors of Divine vengeance, and from his dreadful imagery comes a voice of warning more fearful than the cry uttered by the despairing spectres of Virgil—

Learn Righteousness, and dread the avenging Deities!

The picture which is universally considered to rank first among Correggio's works in Oil, the celebrated 'Nativity,' called the 'Notte,' at Dresden, must be looked at rather for what it was, than for what it is, and, unhappily, the principal portions of it have suffered most—The central mass of light formed by the Virgin

and Child, has been so injured by the removal of its glazings, that instead of forming, as it originally did, a focus of brilliancy and warmth, it has the appearance of a white spot—The face of the Virgin has been worse than obliterated—restored, and that by some ignorant manipulator—With these fatal exceptions, the picture is in good preservation, and I draw from the inspection of the original, the elucidation of some points which I had never before been able to comprehend. The action of the old man in front, always appeared to me (in the Engravings) to be weak and unintelligible; the movement of the right arm, giving an idea that he is yawning or rubbing his head, and his knees seem bent with a distressing indication of weakness—This ambiguity results from an inaccuracy in marking the direction of the eye, which, in the copies, seems to gaze on vacancy, but in the original, it is devoutly raised to Heaven, as if in acknowledgment of witnessing something divine and supernatural; his hand is raised for the purpose of taking off his cap, and he is reverently dropping on his knees. The boy next him manifests simple delight at the strange illumination, but the expression of the woman beyond is surprisingly novel, though obviously natural—It is that of perplexed astonishment: she does not even smile (as she is made to do in the prints), but shading her face with her hand, earnestly gazes on the Babe, as if endeavouring to comprehend the cause of the extraordinary effulgence. The Virgin herself, conscious of the Godhead of her Son, manifests no surprise, and the grace or rather the *repose* of her action, as she hangs over Him in holy rapture, is exquisite—We are

so accustomed to admire this picture for the splendid invention which makes the light emanate from the Infant, that we scarcely, perhaps, give due attention to the peculiarly fine feeling evinced in the Child itself. Other painters (and among them, even Raffaelle and Rubens) have, in their pictures of the Nativity, given the *Bambino* an expression of supernatural intelligence; He encourages those who approach Him with gracious smiles and gestures, sometimes even making the sign of the benediction—But the Babe of Bethlehem, as represented by Correggio, is simply the helpless new-born Infant; His little fair head being beautifully foreshortened, and He lies motionless, except in the only gesture He is capable of making, that of spreading and contracting His tiny fingers—How much more touching is this, how far superior the conception which shows the Saviour of mankind, entering the world in all the weakness of His *Human Nature*, to any fictitious embellishment of the subject derived from mere imagination! —The hour chosen is that of Dawn, which is breaking over the horizon, indicative of the Diviner Light just risen on the earth.

The Dresden Gallery contains also the celebrated picture of the 'Magdalene in the Desert.' It is in the finest preservation, and faultless except in name—The lovely recluse seems too saintly ever to have erred, she is the emblem, not of penitence, but of purity.

The 'St. Jerome' at Parma—many years have elapsed since I first saw this picture, with what a thrill of pleasure I well recollect—It was not without emotion that I approached it a second time in 1854, and I

regret to say that my impression of it was tinged with disappointment, for the picture, being hung near a lateral window, receives so undue a portion of light on its lower half, that it is put wholly out of harmony. I really think that the *keeping* of the picture (according to my former recollection of it) is better seen in a fine copy by Baroccio in the Pitti Palace. But this impression, which is merely accidental, being surmounted, what a feast of beauty is the 'St. Jerome!' It is impossible to look without surprise at the consummate practical science evinced by a painter of whose artistic studies we have no record; but who manifests a mastery in all the refinements of executive skill, which one would imagine must have been built on the practice of successive schools, and the experience of ages. In depth, tone, and colour, this picture is pre-eminently fine, but without the slightest alloy of the defects which frequently run parallel with those qualities; it exhibits the exact combination of sharpness and softness, of decision and ductility, which forms the perfection of the oil-pencil. This is the work respecting which I have already quoted the opinion of Annibale Caracci.

The 'Madonna della Scudella' hangs opposite the 'St. Jerome;' it is less rich in composition, but in colour and character equally beautiful. The Saviour is here seen in His boyhood, apparently at about the age of ten. He leans forward on His Mother's lap, His face being turned towards the spectator, with a smile of pensive but ineffable sweetness, which appears to express (what I have no doubt was Correggio's intention) a consciousness of His human destiny. It is irritating

to perceive, that the clouds which sustain the Angels at the top of this picture have been repainted, apparently by some sign-dauber, and converted into opaque bladders of bluish-white—a hideous disfigurement, of which the authorities of the Gallery seem wholly unconscious, since no attempt has been made to expunge it.

The pictures of the 'Descent from the Cross' and the 'Martyrdom of Santa Placida,' in the adjacent apartment, are fine specimens of that graduated harmony for which it is difficult to find a name; the tone is in both subdued almost to half-tint, and has a softened solemnity which alleviates the impression of distress and terror connected with the subjects.

I know of no representation of the Virgin, combining in so high a degree the qualities of matronly dignity, profound sanctity, and lofty intelligence, as that in the picture of the 'Rest of the Holy Family in Egypt,' in the Tribune at Florence. This work is in the highest preservation, and altogether an inestimable specimen of the Master. The figure of St. Joseph equals in grandeur the noblest of Raffaelle. The deep rich tints of his complexion, apparently embrowned by travel, but without any compromise of refinement, contrasts finely with the pale-green monastic hue of the friar, who with devout humility approaches the holy group—The Infant Himself is somewhat more robust than is usual with the Bambini of Correggio, but in tone, colour, and surface it is inimitable—more Titianesque, I had almost said, than Titian himself.

The smaller picture which hangs opposite, wherein the Virgin, kneeling beside the Infant, prepares to lift

Him from the ground, is so beautiful, that the copying it has grown into a profession, the practitioners of which are seen constantly in the Tribune, endeavouring with assiduous toil to satisfy the never-ceasing demand. As these copies continually percolate through Europe, there will never, of course, be any want of *originals*.

The subjects of 'Leda and Io' are in the Royal Museum at Berlin, that of 'Danaë' in the Palazzo Borghese at Rome. We observe in the latter, the indication of a quality which one would scarcely have looked for in Correggio—that of humour. At the foot of the Lady's couch there are two Cupids, one of whom, having caught a piece of gold from the falling shower, is testing it over a crucible with the point of his arrow. This sordid urchin, so far from looking like one of the Artist's beautiful children, seems exactly a fit agent for a mercenary transaction: he is an ugly, sulky, calculating little villain, the very type of a usurer in embryo.

The 'Christ Derided,' and the Mythological Subject, in our National Gallery, are unquestionable specimens of the Master, but not, I think, strongly indicative of his style. The fainting Virgin is indeed the very essence of Art, but the expression of the Saviour is rather that of physical suffering than of sublime resignation. The Pilate looks like an accident, neither reconcileable to linear nor to aërial perspective.

The colouring of the Venus in the graceful group of 'Mercury Teaching Cupid to Read,' is somewhat deteriorated by that tendency to whiteness which I have remarked on in the Mythological pictures of Correggio: he has equipped his Goddess with wings,

not for the purpose of indicating the volatile nature of love, but to etherealise and stamp with the evidence of a divine origin, the passion which she personifies—Nothing can excel the fine understanding and delicate marking of the anatomy of those figures, which is intimated, rather than expressed. There is a small study for this subject at Dulwich, which in *chiaroscuro* and colour, reflects more, in my opinion, the feeling of the Master than the picture itself.

'The Muleteers,' exhibited a few years since at the British Institution, is a fine specimen, and in wonderful preservation, considering that it had been exposed to more than a usual share of those romantic vicissitudes which sometimes occur in the history of paintings. It was presented, says the record, to a friend, purchased from him by a Prince, and for a long time treasured and idolised, but at length, by some strange caprice, disgraced and turned out-of-doors. It encountered every species of distress and indignity, till at last it was actually found at an *Osteria*, officiating as a sign. Proclaimed to the world by the fortunate discoverer, it was discredited at first as a sort of Perkin Warbeck, but finally, on the evidence of indubitable connoisseurship, fully identified, and restored amidst universal acclamation to its original honours.

The history of Correggio himself, was during a long period involved in an ambiguity which seemed to add, if anything could add, to the interest of his Artistic character. He was described to have been the victim of an unhappy fatality, and to have executed his great works amidst poverty, privation, and neglect. And

this mournful theme has excited commiseration of all sorts; it has been made the subject of pathetic poems, of moving tales, and tragic dramas, in which the incident of the chest of *baiocchi* figures with particular and terrible effect. This load of copper, the unworthy shape in which he was paid for one of his great works, he carried home, it is said, three or four miles on a hot day, caught a fever consequently, and died: a natural and well-deserved result, could we credit the ridiculous story that an educated Artist, a man of the loftiest faculties, and finest temperament, should have chosen to impose on himself so degrading and unnecessary a labour, in order to avoid the expense of paying a porter! If it could be proved that Correggio, during his whole life, was struggling with penury, although it would not enhance the excellence of his works, it would certainly add to his merit in producing them; but the conclusion to be deduced from the facts is exactly the reverse. The execution of elaborate works of Art on a large scale is absolutely impossible without the command of considerable pecuniary means — a man might as well undertake, without adequate funds, to build a ship or a house—The painter requires a round of accommodations and facilities demanding outlay at every step, and these will increase in the degree that his works are carried to elaborate perfection—Correggio's bear evidence of having been studied throughout from living models; they are painted with lavish use of materials, of one in particular which at that time was enormously expensive—the *lapis-lazuli*; he employed eminent Sculptors to make small models of his figures (chiefly

for the purpose of assisting his foreshortenings), and finally, his works never betray the slightest indications of haste. These are not the processes of an indigent practitioner: and if this species of evidence be not deemed sufficient, the researches of recent Italian writers, of Pungeleoni in particular, demonstrate by abundant documents that the genius of Correggio was not unappreciated; but that, on the contrary, he was employed by the highest Dignitaries of his day, secular as well as ecclesiastical, and that he was, if not munificently, at least liberally rewarded. If he never obtained, like Raffaelle, the promise of a Cardinal's Hat, nor became, like Titian, a Count Palatine, we may rest assured, that a mind constituted like his, did not distress itself under such privations. What indeed was wanting to *his* felicity? He was happy in his domestic relationships, he was absorbed in his divine creations, and he was secure of immortal fame!

RUBENS.

RUBENS.

It was observed of Napoleon by Madame de Staël; that he was less to be regarded as a man than as a system; an idea by no means hyperbolical, when his vast achievements are considered; when we recollect with what skill, energy, and for a while complete success, he organised and executed his daring conceptions—The remark, although in so widely different a sphere, applies with nearly equal justice to Rubens, whose stupendous and almost innumerable performances appear more like the work of a confederation of Artists, than the productions of a single mind; so much does their quantity exceed what might be expected from human capacity, during the ordinary extent of life.

Nor is the wonder confined to the prolific powers of his pencil; had his works come down to us unaccompanied by the history of his life and character, it must have been concluded that he had never spent an hour out of his painting-room, that he had devoted to his art an exclusive and undivided attention—But so versatile were the powers of Rubens, so general his acquirements, so various the functions which he exercised, that the character of Crichton, supposing (which scarcely anyone does suppose) his history to be true, wanes before it as an inferior wonder. Of that vision-

ary personage, it is only related that he had a surprising talent at acquisition. Rubens possessed the glorious faculty which transmutes the materials it has amassed, and hands them down in a more brilliant shape to delight and astonish posterity—Michael Angelo died at the age of eighty-eight—Titian at ninety-six—Each had exercised his art indefatigably, and to the last; Rubens attained only the age of sixty-three, but it appears that, even at the early period of fifty-eight, he had been incapacitated by the gout from the effective exercise of his pencil—

Within this comparatively limited space, then, he not only built up his vast reputation in Art, but had acquired profound learning, was a proficient in all the elegant accomplishments of his age; an expert linguist, and so skilled in the politics of Europe, that he was selected by his Sovereign to complete difficult negociations with foreign Powers; all which he transacted with consummate skill, and brought to a successful issue—The age in which Rubens lived was, assuredly, a tasteful age, and we have no doubt that when the sagacious Isabella selected Rubens as her Envoy to Madrid and to England, she had calculated on the characters of the Monarchs of those countries, each of whom was passionately fond of Art, and likely to concede points discussed with the Artist in his painting-room, which they might have refused to a mere formal diplomatist in a dry conference at the council-board.

With what skill Rubens brought his Art to bear on his political negociations, there is sufficient evidence in his picture of 'Peace and War,' now in our National

Gallery—The object which he had been commissioned to accomplish in this visit, was the establishment of peace—He painted and presented this picture to the King during his residence in England; and the subject he selected illustrates the blessings of a pacific policy, in contrast with the miseries of war—Could any argument have been better timed, any gift more gracefully presented? Courtesy is said to cost but little, which in its general exercise is true; but when courtesy assumes a shape like this, it really excites one's astonishment. Here is a picture, vast in its general comprehension, complicated and elaborate in its details, and which most other artists would have spent months, nay perhaps years, in executing—But Rubens throws it in as a mere subsidiary argument, as a compliment *en passant*, just as an artist nowadays makes a drawing in a lady's album, and really attaching, apparently, no more importance to it. In the same spirit, having stipulated for an Altar-piece with the superiors of a Church at Amsterdam, instead of one picture he sends them three—Whatever addition be given to other Painters, Rubens is justly entitled to the epithet magnificent—His establishment at Antwerp was princely; and when he travelled, persons accustomed to profuse expenditure, were astonished at the prodigality of his—At home, his life was the *beau ideal* of a Painter's existence. His studio was adorned by a large collection of statues, pictures, busts, *basso-relievos*, and other objects of taste, collected by himself; and here, while engaged in the execution of his great works, he received the visits of the learned, the tasteful, and

the great. In the midst of all this splendour, he grew immensely rich. Fortunate man! and fortunate age! these were golden times for Art, and look more like romance than reality!

That universality by which Rubens is distinguished, is, as might be expected, especially evident in his Art. Every other great Master has his *forte*, but what is the *forte* of Rubens? With which of his most distinguished predecessors, in every branch of painting, has he not competed, if not always achieving victory, at least acquiring honour? If in his 'Last Judgment,' and his 'Fall of the Rebel Angels,' he does not reach the terrible sublimity of Michael Angelo, he rivals him, assuredly, in daring design and prodigality of invention —and if, in the great qualities of majesty and propriety, grace and refinement, he is obviously inferior to Raffaelle; in dramatic force and expression, and in the power of telling his story, he suffers nothing by the comparison—When we advert to colour and effect, we approach Rubens in one of his strongholds: with the exception of some of the finest works of Titian, what is there in the whole Venetian School which can claim superiority over the Medicean series painted for the Luxembourg? Could Paul Veronese, Tintoretto, or Titian himself have seen those works, we can imagine with what glowing enthusiasm they would have acknowledged and done homage to such congenial and glorious excellence.

The subjects of the Medicean pictures were indeed expressly calculated to display the genius of Rubens, which delighted in the exhibition of royal splendour,

in the luxury of allegorical fancies, and the pomp of mythological imagery—But to comprehend this artist in his loftier developments, we must follow him into the domains of History and of Religion. Foremost among his productions of the *latter* class, may be enumerated the three great pictures at Antwerp of the 'Crucifixion,' and the 'Raising,' and the 'Descent from the Cross'—works of wonderful power, in regarding which the admiration of Art is merged in a sense of more solemn emotion. Similar performances from his pencil are frequent in the Galleries as well as Cathedrals of the Continent, but I know none of more consummate excellence than the two large pictures in the Museum of the Belvedere at Vienna, representing Miracles performed by Saint Domenic and Saint Xavier. The subjects are similar, but there is no resemblance in the modes of treatment. In the one, the holy man stands surrounded by suppliant crowds, and human suffering is shown up in appalling varieties—fever—frenzy—epilepsy—convulsion—but all that is repulsive is neutralised with such admirable skill, that the line where the tragic merges into horror, is never once infracted—In the other picture, a dead man is restored to life, his wife stands beside him, nor is there anything in Art finer than her expression—It completely refutes the doctrine that Painting is incapable of exhibiting mixed emotions. She manifests at the same moment, intensity of joy, blent with doubt and astonishment; she is enraptured at the miracle, but scarcely dares to believe it, she distrusts the evidence of her own senses—Other figures express appropriate feeling, in the finest gradua-

tions; we discern the Father and Mother looking to Heaven with devout gratitude, while other spectators press forward with sympathising and amazed curiosity. I know not at what period of his life Rubens painted these pictures, but his practice assuredly must have reached its highest maturity; they are entirely free from that redundancy of form by which his works are usually characterised—exhibiting, on the contrary, a purity of design worthy of the greatest of the Italian Masters, and demonstrating what excellence was within the grasp of this Painter, when he chose to divest himself of his besetting error.

Among his miscellaneous works in the Belvedere, is an Allegorical picture of the 'Four Quarters of the Globe,' represented by female figures. Africa, in the shape of a negress, is by a curious caprice, placed in the centre of the group, occupying with a dark mass, the place more frequently assigned to the principal light —Animals are introduced symbolically—There is a Leopardess, stretched sidelong on the ground, and giving sustenance to her cubs, some of whom address themselves to their meal with most vigorous appetites, but one, gorged and happy, has fallen asleep on his back, his forelegs folded over his breast—Meanwhile an Alligator, stealing from the rushes of an adjacent river, approaches the happy group, clearly indicating his intention to dine with his young friends, and *on* one of them. Vain hope!—the Leopardess, with flaming eye and uplifted paw, prepares to give him such a reception, as shall effectually allay his cravings, and put an end to his uninvited visit.

The Pinacothek at Munich is rich also in the works of Rubens—'The Battle of the Amazons' and 'Samson surprised by the Philistines' are distinguished by a richness and a depth of tone resembling the finest of Rembrandt. Here is his great picture of the 'Last Judgment,' or rather of that portion of it, wherein the Righteous are received into Paradise. It is dazzling and gorgeous, but the opposite and more awful section of the subject is, in my opinion, far superior to it. It is painted on a small scale, preparatory to a larger one, but finished with the utmost accuracy. This composition displays such richness of invention, such novel and complicated varieties of grouping, as cannot be looked at without astonishment. The Artist seems absolutely to run riot in the prodigality of his conceptions; the whole, meanwhile, is executed with a springy elasticity, a playful lightness of touch, and a purity of tint, as if he had been amusing himself with painting a bouquet of flowers. But in respect to the style of composition, it is only necessary to give a glance at the Sistine Chapel to decide, whether the stern simplicity of Michael Angelo, or the picturesque exuberance of Rubens, is best fitted for such a subject.

If originality be the test of genius, the Hunting-pieces of Rubens may perhaps claim precedence over all his works—They are exclusively his own creation, and may almost without hyperbole be called miracles of Art. We stand before them thrilled with amazement, almost with terror: absorbed in the exciting spectacle, we pause not to ask ourselves, by what processes of study the Artist could have trained his hand to depict with

such generic truth and spontaneous fluency, those extraordinary scenes, in which not only men, dogs, and horses, but the wildest inhabitants of the forest and the marsh—the Lion, the Panther, the Hippopotamus, and the Crocodile—are shown under every variety of fierce excitement, instantaneous action, and complicated foreshortening. So intense is the impression, that we almost imagine we hear the shouts, the baying, and the yelling of the terrible combatants; we wish ourselves elsewhere, dividing our admiration between the Artist and those primeval Nimrods who encountered the monsters of the wilderness before hunting was methodised, and when rifles were unknown.

There is no painter, perhaps, more distinguished than Rubens, by that indefinable quality called *charm*. Whatever be his subject, historical, imaginative, or the simplest transcript of landscape or still life, this quality pervades them all—Some few painters appeal to the understanding, the greater number to the eye, but Rubens addresses the heart. And this fascination is more extraordinary, since the great fault with which Rubens is chargeable, is one which might be expected to lead to an exactly contrary result. I allude to that grossness of form, and want of refinement in character, than which nothing in this painter is more striking and unaccountable—He had been accustomed from his youth to courtly associations—he had seen whatever the world had to show, of rank, elegance, and beauty, but his canvas gives no reflexion of his education and habits; his men (I speak not of his portraits) are for the most part little better than gigantic boors; his

women in his best examples, display no higher charm than a sort of middle-aged corpulent comeliness—in his worst, they are unsufferably old, redundant, and vulgar. Nevertheless, figures do occur occasionally (*par exemple*, the nymphs in the 'Peace and War,' and the ladies of honour in the 'Marriage of Catherine de Medicis') which show, that when beauty came in his way, he did not decline to transmit it, but assuredly he never went out of his way in search of it.

Some other faults may be charged on Rubens, which have found a vast development in Modern practice. Sir Joshua Reynolds classed the Schools of Art under two divisions, the Grand and the Ornamental: to them a third has since been added, which may be properly termed the Upholstery style. The professors of this School affect to consider that all the refinements of Art, hitherto deemed indispensable to excellence, are mere fallacies, and that the proper business of Painting is to produce furniture; crude designs, making no more pretension to superior science than paperhangings or printed calicos. But how does this concern Rubens? *His* style, so rich in executive beauty, can surely give no sanction to such barbarous doctrines—Certainly not, but it may be doubted whether he has not contributed, by the brilliant vivacity of his pencil, to diminish that sentiment of reverence with which Art had been previously regarded, and to induce a taste for the superficial rather than the profound—The earlier Masters worshipped Art as a deity; he regards her as a captivating mistress; and the feeling which an Artist brings to his work will be communicated to his spectators. I do not say that

Rubens has brought down Art from her pedestal, but he has taught the multitude to approach her with more familiar homage, he has withdrawn the veil from the shrine—Even in his colouring, this effect is perceptible. In Titian the light seems to emanate from beneath the surface, that of Rubens is spread over it; so carefully is the track of Titian's pencil concealed, that it is impossible to penetrate his processes, and Art becomes in his hands a beautiful enigma and a divine mystery—Rubens, on the contrary, seems proud of his executive dexterity, his prismatic arrangements are ostentatiously displayed, and the student may without painful investigation detect the whole secret of his practice—We may add that the uncompromising dispatch which Rubens made part of his system, as it prevented correction, was inimical to refinement, and had its share in depriving his works of that intensity which characterised the earlier Schools.

If these allegations against Rubens be just, to what do they amount? Is there an Artist more popular, or whose defects are more counterpoised by his merits? When the memory glances through his works, it becomes actually bewildered by the multifarious and dazzling images—His range is almost as universal as that of Nature herself, and every object seems to start spontaneously from his pencil, as if in obedience to an unerring and inherent law—His human actors, it is true, are not always reflexions of the best models, but they are not without a certain grandeur peculiar to themselves; they thrill with vitality, and if deficient in refinement, are at least free from the vagueness of

fanciful forms, or the insipid sameness resulting from a servile imitation of the Antique—His Landscapes, under all the aspects of the season, are sources of unmixed enjoyment; we seem to inhale from them the exhilarating sensations of a spring morning—Even Winter in his hands is not undelightful; among his minor works there are none which I regard with more pleasure than one which represents the interior of a barn, in which a hind is assiduously attending his well-stalled cattle; the poultry, meanwhile, are moping pensively about, under the inclement influence of the season, while the penthouse is heavy, and the leafless trees and skies beyond, are white with the fast-falling snow.—I have seen a sketch by Rubens of a pair of Owls, which I would rather possess than an acre of Historical painting from the hand of an inferior master.

In his power of depicting animals, whether savage or domestic, Rubens is indeed unrivalled—He was the first Artist who ever painted the Horse—The horses of Raffaelle are admirably designed, and full of fire and action, but he has impaired their verisimilitude by engrafting on them something of a human expression, a look of frowning intelligence, which, however ideal, is not at all *equine*—But the Steed of Rubens is the genuine Horse. Whether bearing an Empress, and with arching neck proudly pawing the ground, or dashing madly into the conflict of war, or the chace, the noble animal, his instincts, and his attributes, are identified on the canvas, rather as a splendid reality than a pictorial illusion.

To depict imaginary beings, is perhaps, to a mind of

poetic order, less difficult than the representation of actual forms, governed by organic laws—But the allegorical embodiments of Rubens, genii or sylphs or demons, have such an air of probability, and harmonise so well with the tasks they are designed to perform, that we think of them as of the preternatural beings of Shakespeare: could they exist at all, it must be exactly in such shapes as he has given them—But it is only in the highest altitudes of his Art that Rubens is seen in his true dimensions—It is impossible to stand before his larger performances, whether Sacred, Imaginative, or Historical, without feeling the force of that irresistible power by which Genius bears away our sympathies without stopping to consult our opinions; before which Judgment shrinks from the task of Analysis, and Criticism stands abashed.

REMBRANDT.

REMBRANDT.

CONTRASTING with Rubens in every particular of genius, character, and fortune, Rembrandt is in style his very obverse — These two great contemporaries seem to have arisen in order to convince the world of the varied capabilities of Art. Diffusion is the principle of the one, Concentration that of the other. Rubens assigned a larger portion of light and more florid vivacity of colours to his pictures than any preceding Artist (with the exception of Paolo Veronese). Rembrandt condensed his light into a focus, and *colours*, as apart from colour, have scarcely admission into his canvas. In one point only did these gifted practitioners meet: they were each deficient in a refined perception of character, especially in relation to female beauty. But this deficiency, which it is difficult to comprehend in Rubens, was much more intelligible in Rembrandt, who emerged from the merest obscurity, and whose associations were of the most homely character. His first impulse towards Art was excited by a very simple incident. A ray of light streaming through a narrow aperture in his father's mill, strongly illuminating some prominent object, and rapidly subsiding into darkness, was marked by the boy whom instinct had made a Painter, and from that impression was elicited a style,

distinguished indeed by unexampled peculiarity, but so redundant of strength, richness, and vitality, that it almost imparted a new element to Art—So little was Rembrandt influenced by prescriptive modes of practice, by schools or systems, that instead of seeking Nature by any established track, it may rather be said that he made Nature come to him; and most extraordinary it is, that notwithstanding the extreme singularity of his style, the first impression we receive from it, is that of striking truth, and intense reality.

How his pictures arrest attention in a Gallery! We run up to them, and fasten on them like flies on honey-pots—It matters not who are his rivals; whoever waits, Rembrandt must have immediate attention; radiant colours may flare around him, Paul Veronese, and Tintoretto may unrol whole magazines of shot-silk; Rubens may come cantering by, ushering in groups of fair-haired Goddesses, drawn on golden cars by white horses; Poussin may gravely demand a moment's attention; Titian himself must abide his time, but the stately Venetian, relaxing into a gracious smile, seems to think that the Count Palatine is not dishonoured by the company of the miller's son; and graceful Sir Joshua, with still more genial cordiality, shakes hands with him as a valued acquaintance—Such is the homage exacted by the untaught and unclassical, but commanding powers of Rembrandt!

Breadth, Colour, and condensed *chiaroscuro* are the characteristics of this Master, but to suppose that he merely exercised these qualities in their ordinary acceptation, would be doing injustice to his genius—Cara-

vaggio, Spagnoletto, Zurbaran, and others, deal in contrasts of *chiaroscuro* much more forcible than his; light and shade, indeed, were compelled by those Painters to do extravagant duty, in order to force their pictures into protuberance, and startle with striking effect—And we *are* startled, and we look on their works with wonder, but having once satisfied our curiosity, we feel little inclination to look at them again; whereas, to those of Rembrandt we return with unslaked interest and never-ceasing delight. Yet, graduated as they are, it is evident that his pictures owe little to contrast, nor can Colour itself, eminent as he was in that great quality, be considered indispensable to his effects, since they are rendered perfectly well by Engraving. In respect also to the grand essential Breadth, his practice differs widely from the idea usually attached to that term. By Breadth is meant, in artistic language, the well-defined division of light and shadow, the intervals between them being kept free from an undue proportion of half-tint, the shadows being decisive, and their edges distinctly marked—But Rembrandt recognises no such law; it would be difficult to find that his figures have outlines, or his shadows edges, and so far from avoiding half-tint, his pictures are suffused with it. His fine organ, in fact, led him to perceive that outlines, though essential to the discipline of Drawing-schools, have little or no existence in Nature, that the boundaries of objects are very partially discerned, being lost in fluctuations of ever-shifting shade, and mingling with the atmosphere, or whatever is contiguous to them. But the few sparkling lights, salient

points, or abrupt edges, which Nature *does* present, were rendered by Rembrandt with inimitable spirit; and thus, depicting objects not as he knew them to *be*, but precisely as they *appear*, he impressed the character of truth on all he represented, caught the essence of Art, and left its rules to the Academics.

Nevertheless, it is not to be inferred that the rules of Art are mere fallacies—What is called High Art certainly requires determined markings, and specific contours. No one wishes that the Cartoons of Raffaelle had been executed in the style of Rembrandt, but if Rembrandt was wholly deficient in Classical design, he was quite able to do without it. Who will assert, in the face of such *chiaroscuro* as his, that form is the only medium through which the imagination may be addressed? Yet in spite of our strong predilection for Rembrandt, we are compelled to admit our astonishment that the mind possessing, in all which regards *chiaroscuro*, such intense ideality, should in everything which relates to form and character, betray so entire a destitution of that faculty. Certainly, if a cast of Rembrandt's head could be procured, the Phrenologist would find in it a fertile field of speculation—Not only do opposite faculties jostle each other by direct approximation, but the same organs diverge into the most astonishing discrepancies—His works are harmony itself, his genius is the essence of contradiction. His pictures may be said to resemble those Eastern Temples, where the devotee, after passing through solemn and half-darkened vestibules, is astonished to find a monster seated in the sanctuary—The comparison holds good

in more respects than one—the worshipper is seldom cured of his creed by detecting its fallacy, nor do I believe that anyone possessing a real feeling for Art ever liked Rembrandt the less, for discovering that what purposed to be a sacred or historical picture, and to which his attention had been attracted perhaps, by an effect of almost supernatural grandeur, presents among its human actors, nothing but an incongruous mob: strangely-attired ruffians, half-brigands, half-soldiers, burly functionaries, thick-jowled apoplectic burghers, thieves, beggars, vagabonds of all sorts; and women so hideously ugly that it must have taken some trouble to find models for them—But what then? Is Rembrandt to be made amenable to stately proprieties? Is *he* to be dragged to the bar of conventional taste? Genius forbid! We love him for his very eccentricities; there is, in his groups of grotesque queer-looking nondescripts, a zest, a richness, and a raciness which we should be sorry to exchange for anything better—nay, we sometimes persuade ourselves that nothing *can* be better—It should be added, that however deficient in form, Rembrandt never fails in expression, which, as far as it may be conveyed by the class of characters he selects, is always just, frequently energetic, and sometimes even sublime.

Rembrandt's execution is gorgeously rich, and adjusted with surprising ductility to the character of his subject, and the dimensions of his canvas—The glazings in his larger works sink into the interstices of the thick and rough *impasta*, with a juiciness and succulence which can only be adequately relished by the *gour-*

mands of Art—Looked at closely, the tints thus produced have sometimes the appearance of discoloured spots, but at due distance they drop into the most finished harmony—His pencil, sweeping and despotic as it is, and manifesting on a large scale an almost savage grandeur, is in his smaller pictures exquisitely delicate; faithful as Gerard Dow, soft as Mieris, crisp as Teniers—Considering how large a portion of his pictures is assigned to shade, it is astonishing that they are so utterly free from gloom. It cannot be said that they are in any part sacrificed to shadow, for the shadows are frequently the most beautiful portions of them; but how easily such a style, with less skill than his own, was likely to become heavy and black, is manifested in the innumerable imitations and copies of his works, which for the most part, are of all manufactured articles the most dingy and deplorable; the most shocking insults to the optic nerves, discernible through the whole range of Auction-rooms, Brokers' shops, and Choice Collections.

That ideality which Rembrandt sought not, or was unable to communicate to his figures in works of History or Fancy, he bestowed abundantly on his portraits. The most homely individual who sate to him, he invests with dignity, chiefly, it may be assumed, from the solemnity of his *chiaroscuro*; for he eschewed altogether that conventional stateliness which had hitherto been aimed at by Portrait-painters, and which was perfectly appropriate in the works of Titian or Vandyke, whose pencils were seldom employed except by Kings or Nobles. But Rembrandt's sitters were of a

less elevated class, which we say in no disparagement of his worshipful Magistrates or worthy Burghers, much less of their high-ruffed and black-velveted Dames, all of whom breathe the very essence of respectability, and whom Rembrandt represented exactly as he saw them in the routine of daily life, engaged in their bureaux, counting-houses, and parlours. He led the way, unquestionably, to a more picturesque style of Portrait-painting than had hitherto been practised, but without the compromise of fidelity, a praise which cannot be always awarded to the works of his successors.

Rembrandt's life-size pictures, with the exception of his portraits, are not numerous, nor, considering the usual character of his Historical figures, is this to be regretted. The 'Woman Bathing,' that astonishing example of colour and execution (in our National Gallery), would not, if enlarged to the dimensions of nature, be a very agreeable object; but his smaller works contain all the elements of his style. The picture of 'Christ in the Storm' (in the Collection of the Earl of Ashburnham) evinces even more than his usual refinement in the sentiment of *chiaroscuro*. The vessel, whirled aloft by the winds and waves, is in imminent danger, and terror and tumult pervade the deck. But over that portion of it where the Saviour lies reposing, is effused a mass of shadow, calm, silent, and solemn, as if the elements themselves durst not disturb the spot which is hallowed by His presence—'Joseph's Garment brought to Jacob' (Collection of the Earl of Derby) is a superb specimen of the Master —The story is perspicuously told, the tone of colour is

exactly suited to a tale of terror, and the sympathy of the spectators with the afflicted father, is most feelingly expressed: if the figure of Jacob, who has thrown himself on the ground in the agony of his grief, had been as fine in character as in action, it might compete with the noblest conceptions of the Italian School—In the 'Adoration of the Shepherds' (National Gallery) he adopts the celebrated invention of Correggio in making the light emanate from the Divine Infant; every painter has done the same who has treated the subject since Correggio, but Rembrandt perhaps is the only one whose peculiar genius would have suggested that brilliant conception, even had he never heard of it—'Jacob's Vision' (Dulwich Gallery) is the embodiment of mystery, the very atmosphere of a dream; Angel shapes—

'If shapes they may be called which shapes have none'—

shine solemnly through the gloom, but their medium of transit between Heaven and Earth, which more classical Artists have literally represented by a ladder, Rembrandt has expressed by a ray of light, transparent as a moonbeam—Amidst such ideality, what imports it that Jacob himself is a Dutch ploughboy, fallen asleep under a tree?—The picture of the 'Woman taken in Adultery' (National Gallery) is considered, and justly, to be one of the most exquisite gems of Art. Even in character, that quality in which Rembrandt is often so ludicrously, nay perversely deficient, there is an evident attempt at propriety: the figure of Christ, if not majestic, is at least simple and unaffected; the

woman is neither very old nor very ugly, some of the Rabbis are positively grand. The principle of 'splendour without glare, depth without darkness,' is nowhere more finely exemplified than in this instance: the high lights, although low in tone, are lustre itself, and although three-fourths of the picture are enveloped in shadow, it is entirely free from gloom. The rich ornaments of the Temple, shine through the darkest parts of the background, like the latent brilliancy on the surface of a shell.

It would be superfluous to attempt a further enumeration; Rembrandt's works are to be seen in every Gallery, and none would be less willingly dispensed with—Michael Angelo has been called the Salt of Art, but the term is, I think, much more applicable to Rembrandt. Buonarotti is too awful for any familiar association, but Rembrandt has a relish for which there is no substitute, nor can any pictorial banquet be complete without a sprinkling of him.

VANDYKE.

VANDYKE.

THE greatest of Portrait Painters!—or, if that title can be disputed, it is assuredly by one competitor alone—Reynolds did indeed enlarge the boundaries of this branch of Art, shook off all that was conventional in style, and enriched it with unexampled varieties of picturesque effect—and great, and commanding indeed, must be the claims of the man who in Portrait-painting can contest the laurel with Sir Anthony Vandyke.

Educated in the school of Rubens, and already an accomplished Artist, Vandyke arrived in Italy at that stage of his studies, when he was enabled to avail himself without preliminary labour of the great examples which surrounded him—We may imagine with what enthusiasm a mind so gifted, and so trained, regarded the works of Titian; he was not led, however, to relinquish, or to hold less in reverence, the style of his first preceptor, but combining with the luxuriant fluency of Rubens the depth and richness of the Venetian School, he compounded by the fusion a style which commanded the admiration of his contemporaries, and which will continue to delight the world as long as genuine Art shall be appreciated.

England had the good fortune to count Vandyke among her citizens during the greater portion of his life—It was an alleviating circumstance in the disastrous

history of Charles I., that a Monarch endued with so fine a taste, and so strong a passion for Art, should have met with such a painter—The munificent patronage, nay the friendship, with which Vandyke was honoured by the King, was well repaid by the noble memorials of him which the Artist has transmitted to Posterity; those impressive portraits, perhaps, do more to enlist our sympathies on the side of Charles I., than the most eloquent declamation of his advocates. As the finest of them, perhaps, I would advert to the magnificent equestrian portrait at Windsor. Who can look at that noble impersonation of Royalty, —the majestic bearing—those pensive yet intellectual eyes—that lofty and luminous forehead—the whole deportment so august yet unpretensive—without feeling impressed with involuntary respect? Stern indeed and fiercely fanatical must be the Republican who, associating with this noble exterior the idea of the Monarch's chivalric valour, and his domestic virtues, does not feel his hostility relent, and incline to consider the *Royal Martyr* rather with pity than resentment. We are led, while under such impressions, to think that his political misdeeds were the result of erroneous education, and that when he imposed taxes *ad libitum*, and sanctioned the enormities of the Star Chamber, he persuaded himself that he was merely exercising an hereditary right. It is more difficult to extenuate his desertion of his friends, or to understand the blind infatuation which prevented him from perceiving, when he signed the death-warrant of Strafford, that he was signing his own!

And poor Henrietta, the beautiful Queen! the daughter of Henri IV. of France, the wife of an English monarch, associated with such awful recollections!—We have surely great obligations to the potent magic of that Art, which thus places us *vis-a-vis* with persons so interesting and illustrious, whose very ashes have long since mouldered into dust. The portraits of this regal Lady betray no trace of that excitability for which she was somewhat remarkable, except in the rather exuberant red of her lips, a trait which Vandyke has faithfully transmitted—Her hands are exquisitely symmetrical and delicate, and seem wholly unfit for the robust employment of smashing windows, —a feat which, on the dismissal, by the King, of some of her unworthy favourites, she is said to have performed with extraordinary resolution and success—But let us not laugh (loudly at least) at the triumph of nature over etiquette—Perhaps to the same energy of temperament were due the heroic exertions with which she endeavoured, to use the expression of Bossuet in her funeral oration, to 'sustain the falling Monarchy;' and the still nobler, because passive magnanimity, with which she endured, during her exile, the bitterest inflictions of indigence—Nor were these indications of character more exemplary, than the generous forgiveness which she extended to the people of England, for their courageous defence of their liberties—This perhaps was the greatest effort of all, for resentment is not a discriminating passion, nor felt the less by those who entertain it, from the consciousness of being in the wrong—The pictures of Charles's children are exceed-

ingly fine; there stands the boy-Prince of Wales, indicating already, in his queer quaint-looking eyes, full mouth, and massive cheeks, the future man, the shrewd observer, the wit, the sybarite—good-humoured and insouciant withal, as the huge dog which he caresses—Very beautiful is the figure of the young fair-haired Princess, the gentle and the sensitive, who received in his prison the dying adieux of her Father, and who survived not long the agony of that interview —Near the King hangs the portrait of Strafford, the indomitable statesman and political apostate, who deserted a party which, to use their own expression, 'never deserted him till his head was off.' Patriots are now less decisive, and Parties more polite—There is something in Vandyke's portraits which seems to shadow out, in addition to identity of character, the history of the individual—Strafford's expression, like that of his master, is mournful, and apparently stamped with the consciousness of impending fate—It cannot be said that there is much clairvoyance of this sort in the picture of the Lady Venetia Digby; she looks like an injured saint, a character in which her kind husband, Sir Kenelm, seems anxious to exhibit her, judging from the allegorical figures of Malice, Envy, and Detraction, which the Painter, no doubt by his direction, has placed around her person.

Vandyke's own portrait is among this series, no longer the gay chivalric-looking gentleman of former years, but already, at the age apparently of about forty, somewhat attenuated, as if worn by the fatigues of his profession. A Court Painter in full practice has no

sinecure—This portrait seems to indicate with what sincerity his advice was given to Dobson (whose interests he so generously promoted), when he recommended patience as the best *recipé* for the difficulties of Art, and the trials of life.

Few below the rank of Nobility could lay claim to the privilege of being painted by Vandyke, but of that class he has left a superb series of specimens—Cold, stately, and intensely conscious of their *order*, but withal highminded and pure, they distinctly personify the English Aristocracy of that day—How different a race are the Nobles and Cavaliers of Vandyke from the plethoric full-wigged profligates who figure in the reign of Charles II.; and still more striking is the contrast between his courtly and unapproachable Dames (they do indeed look like the very porcelain of humanity) and the languishing courtezans whom the pencil of Lely has consigned to our doubtful admiration!

Vandyke, in his English practice, manifested that good sense which is, after all, the best regulator of Taste; he gave his English people English complexions, without attempting to enrich, or embrown them with foreign tones or tintings. He never lost sight, however, of the great principles of Art; he knew that crudeness is not brightness, and that harmony is just as essential to the lightest key of colour, as to the darkest—His English portraits, therefore, while they render all the brightness and freshness of the national complexion, are as finely toned as his earlier works, done under the immediate influence of the Venetian School.

Not in the apartments of Windsor only, but throughout

the mansions of our Nobility, and in almost all the Galleries of Europe, the name of Vandyke is associated with whoever were most illustrious in that age; the great, the wise, the brave, and the beautiful. It is the enviable privilege of the greatest Portrait-painters, not only to become acquainted with the most renowned of their day, but to descend identified with them to posterity. But this distinction is not easily won—There is no department in Art, perhaps, which involves greater difficulty than that of Portrait-painting—Supposing the Artist to be equally competent, in point of mental power, to the execution either of History or Portrait, I am by no means certain that the latter is not the most arduous task of the two—The Painter of History selects his subject, commands his time, is harassed by no interference, and is subjected to no opinions but those of competent judges—But the Portrait-painter must accept his subject as it presents itself, must perform his task whether in the mood or not, is annoyed perhaps by the impatience of his sitters, and the suggestive anxieties of their friends, and finally is amenable to every person's opinion—The strongest proof of the difficulty of this branch of Art, may be deduced from the fact, that among the army of practitioners who have devoted themselves to it, three only can be cited, as entitled to rank among the highest order of Painters Those are, of course, Vandyke, Rembrandt, and Reynolds. I omit the mention of Titian and Rubens, considering portrait to have been with them rather an incidental than a regular vocation.

If works are asserted to be faultless, we usually attach to them an idea of insipidity, considering that where there is nothing to blame, there is probably nothing to admire—But this rule must not be applied to Vandyke; it would be absurd to pronounce of any human performance that it is absolutely without blemish, but it is difficult to find, in the whole circle of Art, productions so little alloyed with imperfection as those of this admirable Master—So far from indulging in any peculiarity leading to error, he scarcely avails himself, to their full extent, of the legitimate resources of his Art. We discern in his works few traces of the expedients of the Painting-room. His effects are neither produced by lights concentrated through apertures, nor by colours heightened by excessive contrasts; they exhibit Nature as she is seen in broad daylight, rather inclining to a silvery than a golden tint, yet never deficient in genial warmth, and magnificent in breadth and harmony—Vandyke is peculiarly fine in the quality called *Keeping*. His principal light holds, invariably, its just predominance; but the accessories are neither slurred, nor slighted, indeed, considering with what exact graduation they are adjusted to the general effect, the clearness, distinctness, and spirit with which they are executed is wonderful—His flashing armour, lustrous satins, or adjuncts of any kind, never interfere with the *Portrait*; the face predominates like a *lamp*, riveting the Spectator with a power which amounts to fascination; we can scarcely believe that the person represented is not really before us, that those veins are not animated with vital warmth, that a living

spirit is not looking from those eyes—The fine comprehension with which Vandyke united detail to general effect, is no doubt one of the main sources of that surprising identity by which his portraits are distinguished. He never leaps to his result, never expresses character by broad dashes which the spectator is left to fill out. Yet while imitating Nature with implicit reverence, and omitting no trait, however minute, essential to character, he never passes the point where finish degenerates into weakness—The character of his execution is that of gliding sweetness, but wherever decisive touches are wanted, he plants them with a nerve, accuracy, and spirit which few painters have equalled, and none have surpassed.

The portraits of Vandyke are sometimes accused of having too much the air of persons standing, or sitting, to be painted—This fault, where it really exists, may be generally referred to the manners of the age, and is chiefly discernible in the pictures of persons of high rank, whose deportment Vandyke, no doubt, accurately reflected; and who would have considered it no compliment to have had their habitual and stately demeanour exchanged for that familiar *abandon* which is aimed at in modern styles—But the series of portraits which this Master has left, chiefly in *bistre*, of the Artists, men of Science, and Literati of his day, are surprisingly varied in character, and wholly unconventional. Vandyke indeed was never so much at home as when depicting the features of genius and intelligence—Were I desired to nominate the three finest male portraits in existence, I should, perhaps, select

that of 'Cardinal Bentivoglio' (at Florence), of 'Scaliger' (at Antwerp), and the 'Govartius' in our own National Gallery. Those who are well acquainted with Vandyke's works may probably protest against any such preferences, and indeed it must be admitted that amidst a series so excellent, the difficulty of choice is sufficient to perplex the most ardent amateur, and the acutest critic.

It has been said that Vandyke was persuaded to devote himself to portraiture by Rubens, who was induced to give him that advice from apprehension of finding in him a formidable rival in the department of History—We may always be sceptical as to the existence of mean vices in great characters; but the assumption that the generous and magnificent Rubens was influenced by jealousy in the counsel he gave Vandyke, is unusually preposterous. He perceived, no doubt, that in the then existing state of Art, a splendid career was open to the man who should prove himself to be the greatest portrait-painter in Europe, and he advised his pupil to aim at that position, feeling well assured that he was able to attain it—But had Vandyke applied himself exclusively to Historic Art, he never could have crossed the path of Rubens, who stood almost as isolated in the vastness of his genius as Michael Angelo himself—The style of Vandyke does, no doubt, bear a considerable resemblance to that of his Master, but it has a character of its own, intrinsical, and unborrowed. His colouring is, I will not say more pure, but more delicate, than that of Rubens, he has more refinement in finish, and his figures are

far less alloyed by the exuberance of Flemish form. The picture of 'Charity,' and that of the 'Virgin and Infant Christ,' at Dulwich College, may be adduced as exquisite specimens of the most finished style of Vandyke, who in his easel pictures may be considered, on the whole, a sort of Rubens *reformata*.

In the memoirs of Artists, I know of nothing more gratifying to contemplate, than these two great men in their relative positions. Intimate friends, both at the summit of fame and fortune, rejoicing no doubt in the renown of each other, and as preceptor and pupil, enhancing the lustre of the great sphere which they filled with their collateral glory — they disappeared, and a long night closed in on the atmosphere of Art, until, towards the middle of the eighteenth century, it seemed verging on total extinction—But at length, light dawned on the horizon of a Country which had, indeed, rejoiced in the residence of Vandyke, but which had hitherto been deemed incapable of producing a native Artist—That country, I need not add, was England; nor that the Genius who vindicated her character, and resuscitated the Arts—was Reynolds.

CLAUDE.
GASPAR POUSSIN, CUYP, AND WILSON.

CLAUDE.

COMMENTATORS are sometimes accused of undue partialities, led away perhaps by an honest enthusiasm in favour of the merits they are immediately discussing. I am not apprehensive that the opinions contained in these articles will incur this censure, since they relate only to the greatest of great Artists, to an order of talent rarely vouchsafed to the world, and which it is much more difficult to describe in terms of adequate admiration, than to magnify by exaggerated panegyric.

France claims the honour of having given birth to Claude, but the character of his genius was purely Italian, his style of Art was that of the Venetians, he was, in a word, the Titian of Landscape-painting. We discover in the works of both these great Artists the same principles and the same processes; they had, in all which relates to colour and effect, the same grand power of generalisation; they looked at Nature only in her most magnificent aspects, and they possessed alike that consummate mastery of execution, which conceals, in apparent simplicity, the mysteries of Art. Their works, when hung near each other, seem to respond, as musical instruments do when struck on the same chords.

Whatever the Poets have sung or imagined of that golden age when the earth was one wide scene of Arcadian felicity, is realised in the pictures of Claude. He exhibits to us the mornings and evenings of Paradise, regions of perpetual summer, unsubjected to the

> Skyey influences
> Which do this habitation where we are,
> Hourly afflict:

secure by some blessed immunity from storm or blight, the sweep of the wintry blast, the desolating hurricane, or the ravages of war—His landscapes, nevertheless, are not mere transcripts of rural nature, nor reflections of the simplicity of primeval ages: they abound on the contrary, with imagery indicative of civilised life and art and refinement—Among the stately trees which usually occupy his foregrounds, rise classical structures—temples or palaces, august in regal or religious dignity; and glimmering out through the depths of his middle distances are discerned towers, terraces, and aqueducts, enriching the perspective with endless varieties till it melts into the blue horizon—The Trees of Claude have been said to be aristocratical, but he certainly made no attempts to classify them; they are never individualised, nor even distinguished by their *genera*; they are neither oaks nor pines nor beeches, nor any other definite sort of *arboræ*; they are simply Trees, but assuredly the noblest of their race, large, majestic, umbrageous, and beautiful. There is no trace in Claude of the sadness of the desert or the wildness of the forest; his sylvan solitudes are

wholly deficient in that species of interest excited by the scenery of Salvator; they are untintured with savage romance, neither affording homes to the robber, nor allurement to the anchorite. But they are the sanctuaries of health and peace; silent, sequestered, yet bright and exhilarating. Purity and loveliness are the elements of Claude; he is at once the most natural and the most poetic of Landscape-painters.

Conspicuous among the works of this Artist are his splendid Seaports; they are illuminated invariably by the rising or setting sun, a mode of treatment which sets at defiance the precept of Du Fresnoy, who counsels the Artist, while exhibiting the effect of light, never to show the sun itself; for vain, he says, is the attempt

> ——to paint the full-orbed ruler of the skies,
> With pencil dipped in dull terrestrial dyes.

The two pictures, one of the 'Queen of Sheba' and the 'St. Ursula,' might have been sufficient to convince Du Fresnoy of the futility of his maxim—The former, indeed, can no longer be cited as an example of Claude, having been barbarously defaced in our National Gallery, under the pretext of cleaning—but the 'St. Ursula,' which happily escaped that infliction, still presents an exquisite specimen of the especial merits of the Master —The sun is here seen ascending in cloudless splendour, no medium intervening except the thin haze proper to the hour; but the bright orb, though it forms no spot, is not wanting in brilliancy; the slanting rays catch on buildings, vessels, the rippling waves, human figures, and the shore, with a truth and graduated exactness,

which amounts to absolute illusion—Claude was exceedingly cautious in his choice of accessories. Regal structures belong properly to the two pictures just mentioned, but even when the subject is a mere seaport, divested of any extrinsic character, such objects only are admitted as belong to great cities; vast moles, the towering Pharos, and the halls of princely merchants. When the subject is drawn from Antiquity, great skill is shown by Claude in throwing the mind back to the period selected; architecture, shipping, adjuncts of every sort, all seem to belong to a bygone era—His human figures are distributed with great judgment, they have little claim to attention on their own merits, but they do their office efficiently in relation to the general effect.

In the great quality of aërial perspective, Claude is especially admirable; his objects become bright or obscure, positive or neutral in colour, sharp or indistinct in touch, and advance or recede through all the gradations of distance, with a truth of illusion which obliterates all idea of a flat surface,

> And miles seem crowded in an inch of space.

Considered in their whole combination, his works assuredly stand above all competition in their department; Reynolds was accustomed to say, 'that we might sooner expect to see another Raffaelle than another Claude;' and without quite concurring with so unqualified an opinion, it may be admitted that such testimony from so consummate a critic, may suffice to satisfy our consciences, if occasionally, while dwelling

and luxuriating over the beautiful creations of this great Artist, we find that our admiration is a little trending towards the borders of idolatry.

GASPAR POUSSIN—CUYP—WILSON.

THE style of Gaspar Poussin is the epic of Landscape-painting. *He* sought not Nature in her aspects of voluptuous beauty, but in the majesty of darkness, or in the 'ennobling stir' of the elements. Light he scarcely recognised, except in one long gleam shot athwart the dusky horizon by the departing sun. There are in our National Gallery two pictures strongly illustrative of the peculiar powers of this Painter, similar in subject but marked by the finest discriminations. In each a tempest is represented, and in each with its proper components, the drifting wrack, trees uptorn, frighted horses and cattle, and mountain-torrents lashed into fury—The one is simply a land-storm, the usual occurrence of the season, the explosion of summer-heat. But the other, which represents the tempest by which Dido and Eneas were surprised while hunting, is evidently of preternatural origin. Not Virgil himself, with his gorgeous machinery, his vindictive Deities, and howling Nymphs, the shrieking air, and the groaning earth, has told the story with more emphatic distinctness. We are not much indebted to the little divinities perched in the sky (painted by Francesco Albano) for the elucidation of the story. It is in the storm itself, in those terrific clouds that seem absolutely distorted with agony, that expand, collapse, descend, and burst

in cataracts of thunder, lightning, and rain, that we trace the manifestations of Divine wrath. The intense and deadly gloom in which the whole scene is enveloped, except as it is irradiated by a baleful and sulphurous glare, accords well with the incident; and its consequences. The unfortunate Queen is dimly discovered in the cave; Eneas appears exactly the punctilious, but not over-scrupulous, personage his poet has described him—(one often wonders how poor Dido could have taken such a liking to him)—and the effect of the whole picture resembles that of a grand Overture played to a Tragedy—death, revenge, and interminable war forming the main ingredients.

Such was the intention of Gaspar Poussin in this noble picture, in which genius is exhibited which gives it a right to rank amongst the highest productions of Art. To speak of it technically, the colouring and execution are wonderful; the depth and darkness in which the whole picture is enveloped, would have sunk any inferior Artist into opacity and mud. But Gaspar Poussin literally triumphs in the storm; the atmosphere is indeed murky and convulsed, but it is atmosphere still; and amidst the terrors of the scene, we feel almost refreshed and exhilarated by the vitality of the driving blast.

Air, as distinguished from *sky*, has scarcely ever been so felicitously painted as by our Wilson; his atmosphere is indeed pure ether, and the bright clouds which float in it, flinging back the sunbeams from their glittering edges, and buoyant as birds, seem, like them, to rejoice in liberty and light.

Cuyp was of a soberer temperament; he aims not at splendour, he shuns vivacity; his effects are those of the summer afternoon, drowsy, delicious, the whole lanpscape lapt in benign repose, the *siesta* of Nature—And what a space he expands before us! His aërial perspective is in one particular more surprising even than that of Claude. In the latter the *aërial* is greatly assisted by the *linear* perspective; towers, trees, masts, objects of all sorts graduate towards the horizon, and beguile the eye with the sense of distance; but in Cuyp, it frequently occurs that scarcely any object intervenes between the foreground and the horizontal line. A shepherd, a few stunted poplars, with herds or flocks sprinkled over the middle space, compose the picture. Yet the illusion of distance is complete; the ends of Art are accomplished, but apparently without the means.

Nor is Cuyp, in his exhibitions of animal character, less admirable than in landscape. There is, in the National Collection, a wonderful instance of his skill in subjects of this class. The picture is an actual treat to anyone accustomed to the observation of rural life. The construction of incidents is almost dramatic—Two dogs are in close conference, and evidently meditating an attack upon a dun cow near them; they are a couple of thorough *raffs*—We can scarcely discover whether one has fetched the other, or whether their meeting is purely fortuitous, but congenial tastes and sympathy have brought them to a cordial understanding; they are arranging their plans like a couple of practised tacticians, each nevertheless being willing

enough to concede to the other the honour of commencing the fray. The Cow, meanwhile, is perfectly aware of their intentions; this is visible in her eye, quietly but earnestly fixed on them, and in her extended neck. She regards them, however, with an air of thorough contempt; it is evident that their impertinence will not induce her to rise; she is convinced that the tossing her head a few times will be quite sufficient to keep them at bay—How different an animal is the Shepherd's Dog on the other side! He has a character to preserve, but there is a certain wistful writhing in his body, which intimates that were he not restrained by habitual discipline and a high sense of principle, he would be willing enough to take part in the fun which his neighbours are concocting; they, in fact, are members of the *fancy*, he is a police-officer; they belong to the romantic, he to the classical school. Nearly equal discrimination is manifested in the faces of the sheep; an experienced shepherd, I believe, perceives as much physiognomical difference in the countenances of his flock, as other persons would do in the same number of human individuals—He is able to detect the absence of any belonging to them without counting, and there is no doubt that such a person, placed before this picture, would at once distinguish each animal by its proper idiosyncrasy—Every sort of vegetation is touched by Cuyp with lightness and spirit, yet with a fidelity which might satisfy a botanist. Nor was he meanly skilled in the delineation of the human figure—The reputation now held by Cuyp is a strong proof of the impartial adjudication of Time.

Not many years since, he was ranked among the second class of Artists; at present, who in his line can claim precedence of him? To the lofty ideality of Claude or Gaspar Poussin, he has assuredly no pretensions, but in the exhibition of simple pastoral Nature he has not a superior, scarcely an equal.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

Among the distinguished men of all countries, but more especially of our own, there are some whom we regard not only with the admiration due to their talents, but with a sentiment resembling that of personal attachment. Such are Shakespeare—Nelson—Sir Joshua Reynolds—luminaries moving in widely different spheres, but resembling each other not alone in this genial peculiarity, but in other points belonging to the largest orders of mind—There was nothing erratic in their course, they were above eccentricity, their triumphs were as judiciously organised, as brilliantly accomplished.

Many circumstances concurred to facilitate and give *éclat* to the career of Reynolds—At the time when he returned from Italy, Art had never been at so low an ebb in England—Hogarth's track was so entirely dissimilar, that he could scarcely be considered a rival. Yet this uncontested field, which presented Reynolds with a ripe harvest for the mere trouble of reaping, might have proved, in less efficient hands, by no means an unqualified advantage. There was nothing to stimulate rivalry, nothing to stir the faculties into vigorous exertion; he might have slumbered out his life in eminence as inglorious as that of his predecessor Kneller, who, borne along on the full-tide of fashion,

and laughing at the worthlessness of his own pictures, while revelling in the wealth they brought him, was contented to luxuriate over his venison and claret, without disturbing himself about ideal perfection in Art, or with aspirations for immortal fame. It was the practice of this Artist, it is said, to have a great number of pictures ready prepared by his assistants, wherein periwigs, coats, and draperies of all sorts were accurately finished, blanks being left for the faces—From this assemblage, persons who applied for portraits picked out whichever they fancied, and the face was put in; an admirable and characteristic style of portrait-painting no doubt, but which perfectly satisfied our forefathers of the time of George I.

But Reynolds had formed his mind on the great examples of other ages, and continued through life as ardent a competitor with Titian and Correggio, with Rubens, Rembrandt, and Vandyke, as if he had been their immediate contemporary—As he himself expressed it, he kept the path of those great Artists, but without treading in their footsteps; he availed himself of their principles, but without becoming their copyist—His style has been called *eclectic*, perhaps it was so, for no new principles of Art were left him to discover; but no man's works have more decidedly the stamp of originality, since, meet them where we may, we instantly recognise them as his. To his specific branch, that of Portrait, he communicated a character hitherto unknown—picturesque varieties of attitude, and accessories so rich, especially of landscape, that we sometimes turn from the figures in order to enjoy the

beautiful backgrounds—He has not, it is true, the sustained methodical brilliancy of Titian, nor the clear, distinct, and scientific execution of Vandyke; but do the portraits of those great Masters fill the mind so completely as those of Sir Joshua? Have they not, for the most part, the air of persons stationed on the painter's platform, gravely erect, with their eyes fixed on the spectator? Reynolds on the contrary seems to have dropped in on his sitters by accident and to have fixed them on the canvas without their cognisance; and what is most extraordinary, he had no difficulty in reconciling to these fortuitous arrangements, that first grand requisite demanded from portrait-painters—likeness. He engrafted on personal character the styles of thinking, the habits and distinctive indications of whole classes. Who could mistake any one of his distinguished men as belonging to any *order* but their own? His Admirals represent that glorious race of warriors who have confronted 'a thousand years the battle and the breeze;' our hearts warm at the very sight of them, and mighty eras come thronging on the mind, past and, we trust, to come (should occasion demand it), of national vindication, of victory and glory—But Sir Joshua's fine discrimination is evinced perhaps still more in minor, than in general distinctions. Look for instance at his officers belonging to the different services. There is no resemblance between his Generals and his Admirals. Glance from the portraits of Boscawen and Keppel to those of Granby and Ligonier. In the latter you perceive the peculiar dignity of the land-service- stateliness in the

storm—But our magnates of the sea lean on cliff or anchor, or stroll along the shore, manifesting the same pleasant *insouciance* and ingratiating *naïveté* with which they take ships and storm castles; apologising perchance, as Troubridge did at St. Elmo, for taking the fort with so little attention to the rules of Art!—Then what wisdom, gravity, profound research, are exhibited in Sir Joshua's Judges! We will not say, as Fox said of Thurlow, that nobody *could* be so wise as they *look*, but assuredly they have that impress of deep learning, patient deliberation, and manly integrity, which leads us to rejoice that 'our lives and safeties all' are entrusted to such respectable keeping—Reynolds found no difficulty, whenever his subject permitted, (and sometimes when it did not) in elevating his portraiture to the dignity of historic or even epic style—What a magnificent performance is that of Mrs. Siddons in the character of the Tragic Muse! It was pronounced, and justly, by Sir Thomas Lawrence, to be indubitably 'the finest female portrait in the world.' The greatest qualities of Art are condensed in this picture: colouring brilliant although subdued, magnificent *chiaroscuro*, expression, who can describe it?

> Sometimes let gorgeous Tragedy
> With sceptred pall come sweeping by.

She sits, indeed, absorbed in poetic vision, and our admiration is divided between the consummate Artist and his glorious subject—Reynolds is accused of inconsistency between his principles and his practice: he continually inculcated, it is said, the imitation of

Michael Angelo, but never attempted it—This picture settles the question. It is as direct an imitation of Michael Angelo as was compatible with his own style. The Tragic Muse is seated, like the Sybils of the Sistine Chapel, in solemn state, a ministering spirit on either hand; but she bears nothing more than a general resemblance to the gigantic Prophetesses of Buonarotti, nor did the Artist intend that she should. I cannot but confess, however, that in his written opinions on the subject, Sir Joshua does seem to swerve a little from his usually correct judgment. 'Were my life to come over again,' he says in his last Lecture, 'I would leave all, and follow the style of Michael Angelo.' Yet no one could have known better than himself, that all implicit imitation of that style had ended in sheer absurdity; besides the equally conclusive objection, that it was wholly incompatible with the character of his age—Had Sir Joshua really devoted himself to an uncompromising imitation of Michael Angelo, his career, I am afraid would have been widely different from that which he had the good fortune to achieve.

It is curious to know that while this noble work was in progress, the painter was wholly dubious as to its success. A correspondence is extant between Sir Joshua and an Engraver, in which he assures the latter, that he was quite uncertain whether the picture would ever be worth engraving or not. It used also to be related by Northcote, at that time a resident pupil with Sir Joshua, that he had never seen him betray so much misgiving and anxiety respecting any of his works. 'It kept him,' said Northcote, 'quite in a

fever'—Such are the processes by which great works are sometimes performed, which in their final result strike us with all the force of sudden and glorious inspirations.

There is in the French *Académie des beaux Arts*, a very large picture by De la Roche lately deceased, representing a convocation of the distinguished Artists of all countries. The only representative of England in this *reunion* is an Architect, Inigo Jones—Now, with what motive could any man engaged on such a subject, and having a perfect acquaintance with the Arts of Europe, omit either Reynolds or Hogarth? This is more extraordinary, as Monsieur De la Roche had frequently been heard in conversations with his pupils to advert to this very picture of the 'Tragic Muse' in terms of high admiration. 'It hangs,' he said, 'opposite to one of the finest of Titian' (at Lord Grosvenor's), 'and it is difficult to say which is best, but each reflects lustre on the other'—How then are we to reconcile this difference between public and private testimony? How account for the injustice done our great Artist? It is not, let us hope, because he was an Englishman!

One of the finest qualities in Sir Joshua is the inborn unobtrusive gentility of his portraits, of his women especially, who manifest invariably that unaffected refinement of expression and deportment which results from habitual elegance of taste and habits—Sir Thomas Lawrence had the reputation of being preeminent in this particular, and a sort of elegance he certainly had in a very high degree; but compared with Reynolds,

it was merely fashionable, factitious, theatrical—The characteristic I describe is so general in Reynolds' female portraits, that it is scarcely necessary to select particular instances; I will advert merely to one in the National Gallery, that of the 'Graces,' in which the three beautiful daughters of Sir William Montgomery are seen decorating an altar of Hymen—What unconscious grace, what purity of feeling, pervade this group! The picture may be considered an excellent antidote, by all British Students who may have the good sense to study it, to that style of flashy, meretricious extravagance, which seems to find its congenial atmosphere in our Annual Exhibitions—its native soil. No Artist ever touched the traits of maternal tenderness more happily than Reynolds; but delightful above all, are his children, caressing or caressed by their mothers, or sporting in playful groups. He arrests, in fact, the momentary phases of childhood in all their graceful varieties, passive or active; alike in the half-contemplative little girl, called 'Innocence' (also in the National Gallery), or in the livelier demonstrations of the Princess Sophia of Gloucester, sprawling on the ground, and nearly smothering, in the excess of her affection, her darling lapdog.

No man's works have encountered a greater variety of criticism than those of Sir Joshua—Everyone finds fault with them; all agree to admire them—He has been accused of being an inveterate plagiarist; (yet, as I have already observed,) his works are stamped with an originality which is wholly unmistakable. His execution, it is alleged, is coarse and slovenly, yet he

hits delicacies of character and expression, with a felicity which few Artists have approached. It is universally agreed that he could not draw, yet he ventures attitudes, and dashes through the boldest foreshortenings, with a freedom and success, which utterly mystifies the sticklers for Academic skill. Among the minor accusations against Sir Joshua, is the mutability of his colours; certainly we sometimes meet with portraits of his, which look very like the ghosts of the individuals they represent—but his works generally (unless they have been cleaned) have lost nothing either in tone or colour, and frequently bear out among others with such brilliancy as to eclipse everything around them. They combine indeed all the elements of effect. There is scarcely an Artist who unites, with such strength of *chiaroscuro*, such lightness and vivacity—He holds a place in this particular midway between Titian and Rembrandt. *Chiaroscuro*, in Titian, is a negative quality, doing its office in conducing to the general effect, but never obtruding itself as a principal. In Rembrandt it is all-important, and colours are merely accessories, which enlarge or contract, advance or recede, just as they happen to fill out his masses of light and shadow—The effects of Reynolds, as I have said, combine both principles; and being less diffuse than Titian's, less concentrated than Rembrandt's, exhibit a combination of strength and harmony which is sometimes more attractive than either—Colouring is a quality which comes less within the reach of description than any other; it would indeed be difficult to convey by words the slightest idea of that union of

genial warmth, with delicious coolness, which characterises the colouring of Sir Joshua—His surface is in itself a visual luxury; the rich *impasta* is flung about with an apparent carelessness, a riot almost of executive enjoyment, which contrasts singularly with the finely-regulated effects of which it is made the medium —Sir Joshua is said to have set no slight value on this captivating *bravura*, but he was one of the few Artists who, possessing that quality in an extraordinary degree, very rarely abused it.

It would be difficult indeed, to find among the works of Reynolds, any instance wherein the manual outruns the mental power—In all which relates to expression, he was peculiarly successful, whether in subjects of gaiety or pathos. Beaufort's harrowing remorse, the dying agony of Dido, the terrible concentration of despair in Ugolino, seem scarcely to emanate from the same mind with the fun and frolic of the little grotesque imp, Robin Goodfellow. The guise of a chubby child was, perhaps, a singular medium for so unsubstantial a personage, but Sir Joshua Reynolds was not without precedent. Shakespeare likens Pity to 'a naked newborn babe striding the blast;' there can be no just reason, therefore, that our friend Puck should not sit astride on his toadstool—The 'Infant Academy' exhibits another class of sentiment; it is full of quiet, quaint, delicate humour. The triumphant look of the boy-painter, delighted with his task (although we see but a third of his face), is admirable, but not superior to that of the little coquette, full of bashfulness and consciousness of beauty, who is sitting to him—But

the expression which we think happy almost beyond the rest, is that of Garrick between Comedy and Tragedy—Whether Reynolds really thought Garrick's *forte* was Comedy, or whether he adopted this mode of treating the subject, for the sake of picturesque effect, is not important, but the result is inimitable—Nothing is to be imagined more alluring than the figure of Comedy, nor is the choice of the Actor at all doubtful; he turns to her like one compelled by some intense attraction, but that which forms the zest of the picture is his look of apology and expostulation to the Tragic Muse. He seems to say, 'I venerate, I admire you, I would devote to you all the energies of my genius, but—my gentle Melpomene, look at this fascinating creature here, your Comic Sister; I appeal to your candour, what *can* I do? Is it possible to resist her?'

Such works as these, surely might suffice to silence that class of critics who assert that Reynolds was incompetent to what is called *High Art*—But if these be not sufficient, others are at hand of still wider range, and loftier conception; nor need I adduce more than the two great pictures of 'Macbeth in the Witches' Cavern,' and 'The Infant Hercules,' neither of them resting their main interest on human passion, but involving the noblest developments of abstract imagination. The picture of Macbeth is pervaded throughout, like the Drama itself, by mysterious *glamourie*, and a web of diabolical agencies; by these the chief actor is surrounded and emmeshed, and thus is he represented by the Painter—Strange shapes, ambiguous symbols, 'fiends that lie like truth,' hem him in, at once

stimulating his crimes, and shadowing out his punishment. There are, the armed head—the blood-stained babe — the moving wood — Before him stands the dread spirit of Banquo, enlarged to supernatural dimensions, and pointing with grim triumph to his progeny of Kings, who in turn point to *their* descendants—

> That twofold balls and triple sceptres carry.

The weird hags meanwhile, having wrought up the resolution of their dupe to the climax of desperate guilt, quit him with insolent derision—

> We'll charm the air to give a round,
> That this *great King* may kindly say
> Our duties did his welcome pay.

Infernal chants mingle with muttering thunders, and then—'The witches dance and vanish.' This is thrillingly awful, but to transfer such a scene to canvas, involved difficulties scarcely to be comprehended, except by a practical Artist—The uncouth and hideous forms of the dancing witches are terrible in the grand indistinctness of Poetry, but expressed in the palpable embodiment of Painting, they might have become exceedingly ridiculous. So thought Reynolds evidently, for he has transformed the saltatory hags into beautiful nymphs, who whirl through the air in graceful gyrations—The Artist has thus escaped what might have looked like a *travestie* of terror, and redeemed by the interposition of agreeable forms, the ghastly phantasmagoria of the general effect—This fine conception belongs exclusively to the Painter, and is worthy of the Poet himself.

Not more judiciously constructed, nor finely reasoned, but much more striking in effect, is the picture of the 'Infant Hercules'—The cradled Alcides, grasping in his baby-hands the monsters sent to destroy him, kills them by compressing their throats, nor does the slightest shade of fear mingle with his princely indignation; on the contrary, he regards his dreadful assailants with an expression of such supreme contempt, as is at once amusing and sublime—Surely the superb disdain which curls the lip, and dilates the nostrils of the Pythian Apollo, is nothing to this. The shrieks of the terrified Mother and her attendants have alarmed the palace—The King and his *cortége* enter *en masse*; the Monarch, lifting on high his golden sceptre, endeavours to stay the tumult, and command attention—The feat they witness aptly typifies the career of a hero whose mission it was to vindicate the world from outrage and injustice, and the blind Seer Tirezius, bursting into sudden inspiration, proclaims the incipient demigod, and predicts his achievements—As if in confirmation of his prophecies, a burst of glory streams through the dome, athwart which, borne in volumes of black and portentous clouds, Juno is discerned, scowling disappointment, and meditating new projects of vengeance.

The genius of Reynolds has exercised a larger influence on the Arts of Europe, than the different Schools are perhaps sensible of, or may be willing to admit. The style called in France the *Romantic* may be clearly traced to his works, and those of other English practitioners who adopted his principles; and which, dis-

persed widely over the Continent through the medium of Engravings, diffused a taste for picturesque effect, and the vitality of truth and nature, in contradistinction to the pedantic conventionalism everywhere established, under the *régime* of State Academies—This healthful impulsion was repressed for a time, indeed apparently extinguished, by the ponderous style of *David*; but, like a vigorous plant, it shot up through the impediment, and now triumphs in its turn over its prostrate antagonist. A less tangible, but much more intolerable enemy confronts us at present in the ghost of Gothic Art, evoked from its grave by the conjurors of Germany, and calling itself Pre-Raphaelite—This phantom has shaken its grisly locks, causing more or less affright throughout all the Schools of Europe; but the goblin, we may safely trust, will be finally exorcised from our own, by the salutary influences of Reynolds, and the style which he established.

There is nothing more enviable in the career of this great Artist, than those brilliant associations which the sympathies of Genius, and the amenity of his character, had attracted to his house, as to a common centre. His was an age of celebrities; Burke, Johnson, Gibbon, Fox, Goldsmith, Garrick, were his intimate friends, and they, and other kindred spirits, distinguished in the Senate, in Science, and in Literature—delighted to congregate, and to give free play to their great powers, at his genial table. One hour, surely, of such intercourse must have been worth an age of ordinary existence. Here was no place for the stilted etiquette which deems earnestness vulgarity, and energy an outrage; the col-

lision of such intellects resounded like the tramp of an army, and the room, as we have it from Boswell and Dunning, flashed and thundered like a battlefield, with the explosion of wit, and the roar of argument. But the drawingroom was attempered by softer influences; *there* were wont to assemble the most beautiful and accomplished women of the day; and the majesty of Siddons, the piquancy of Thrale, the grace and *esprit* of Montague, and of other 'bright particular stars,' gave the finishing charm to those delightful *réunions*—Reynolds meanwhile, assiduously devoted to his Art, was continually surprising the Public with some 'new wonder,' and he not only redeemed his country from the charge of incapacity in Art, but stood acknowledged to be the greatest living Painter in Europe. This was a splendid position, and he had the good sense to appreciate it, having declared to a friend during his last illness, that his life had been fortunate and happy beyond the common lot of humanity.

SIR DAVID WILKIE.

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Few persons who happened to observe a youth whose name was registered in the Books of the Royal Academy as David Wilkie, quietly engaged in his studies, would have been impressed with a belief that he was destined to become the founder of a School. There was nothing in his rather rustic appearance and demeanour, nor in his simple sandy physiognomy, which seemed to give promise of an extraordinary man. But David had 'that within which passeth show'—He had acquired the elements of his Art in Edinburgh, and could have gained little from his introduction to the Royal Academy of England beyond the mere opportunity of drawing; for the School was at that time merged into a Manufactory of Portrait-painting, and, what was worse, marked by rampant mannerism. So entirely, indeed, had public patronage been monopolised by this branch of Art, that little chance was left, even of bare subsistence, to an Artist who ventured to direct his talents into any other channel. But the instincts of genius were too strong in young Wilkie to be controlled by expediency. Struggling with indigence, encountering daily impediments, and with little confidence in reward or recognition, he projected, executed, and sent to the Exhibition the picture of the 'Village Politicians.' The

Public, delighted with a display of feeling, character, correct delineation, and genuine Art, to which they had been long unaccustomed, sent up a shout of admiration; and the modest student, starting up from his timorous dreams of poverty and neglect, at once 'found himself famous'—Yet critics were not wanting, who insinuated (and perhaps without evil *animus*) that the 'Village Politicians,' might have been a fortuitous hit, a sudden ebullition of youthful talent, giving promise of excellence which the future efforts of the Artist might fail to justify. These apprehensions were soon effectually set at rest. In the ensuing year appeared the picture of the 'Blind Fiddler,' a work which exhibited in such perfection the combination of mental and executive power, as clearly to demonstrate that the merits of Wilkie were founded on principle, not accident. This picture is one of the most surprising instances of precocious talent on record, involving so wide a range of observation, experiment, and skill, that no one not aware that it was executed in the Artist's twenty-fourth year, would have believed that anything less than the practice of a long life could have been capable of producing such extraordinary excellence.

The universal cry was, Wilkie has revived the Dutch School!—He had done a great deal more—There was nothing in that School which could compare with the varied capabilities of Wilkie; he drew no doubt from the Flemish and Dutch painters his principles of colour and execution; and it is greatly to be regretted that subsequently, he sought his examples elsewhere, for his

early pictures are decidedly his best—He never equals, it is true, the Dutch Masters in texture, tone, or richness of surface, but he had enough of those qualities to make his pictures effective; while in the purely mental development of Art, he claimed a position superior to any painter of his class, native or foreign, who had yet appeared, with the single exception of Hogarth. It is, however, unjust both to Hogarth and Wilkie, to assert that they belonged to any class at all—In Hogarth we recognise not only the consummate Artist, but the stern censor, waging war against the vices and follies of his day; but in dragging up his culprits for punishment, he brings us rather too closely into contact with them; we shrink from the graceless delinquents, and are only induced to witness their castigation, by the splendid dexterity evinced in the management of the whip. Wilkie did not set up for a graphic executioner, nor for the purposes of his Art was it necessary that he should—The natural connection between taste and morals, is sufficient to establish the ethical utility of the Fine Arts; it is not requisite that every picture should have its particular precept, and acquaint us, like the copybooks, that 'Vice is odious,' and that 'Virtue is amiable'—But Wilkie's pictures, if they have not the pathos and intensity of Hogarth, are perhaps more agreeable, as they are drawn from the lighter and more pleasurable emotions of life. The qualities in which he especially excelled, were composition and expression. His story is always told, whether in relation to leading or collateral points, with inimitable perspicuity. West called him the Raffaelle

of *low life*, in reference, I suppose, to this power of telling his story; but it was unjust to apply the term *low* to Wilkie's works, which, although the subjects are usually drawn from humble life, are free from the slightest taint of vulgarity. Nor are his powers of expression less admirable, that he dealt little in the display of the sterner and more demonstrative passions. The Artist has at least an equally difficult task, who transmits and gives interest to the familiar and fleeting shades of ordinary existence, supplying apparently no material for the pencil, and scarcely noticeable except to the eye of genius. It is singular that Wilkie, acute as he was in his distinctions of character, never learnt to generalise in that particular. His delineations of old, middle-aged, and especially of quaint-looking people, have a portrait-like fidelity; but his actors are inveterately Scotch, that is to say Celtic-Scotch, a peculiarity which seems extraordinary in a Painter who left his own country at so early an age, and saw little of it afterwards. Like Rubens and Rembrandt, Wilkie was deficient in his perceptions of female form; his damsels, without being idealised, are the reverse of luxuriant; they are prim, pallid, sometimes rather pretty—but they never make the slightest approach to the beautiful. These general comments will perhaps be best illustrated by a few notices of particular pictures, selected as characteristic, but not with the view of implying that they are superior to the general series.

'The Parish Beadle.'—A poor Italian Itinerant, his wife, son, bear, dog, and monkey, are marched off into

'durance vile'—Poor wanderers! 'the world is not their friend, nor the world's law,' but our feelings are enlisted on their side; we long to set them at liberty, and to lock up the burly man-of-office in their stead. The Italian, however, and his *cara sposa* are not two of those pigeon-livered persons who lack 'gall to make oppression bitter;' loud and long are their reproaches, and fierce their gestures at the inexorable beadle; not so their poor boy, who trudges along, the very image of passive resignation, a sentiment shared in its fullest extent by the monkey and the dog, except that the latter, protruding his forelegs at an angle, and shrinking back from the jail-door, seems to intimate pretty clearly that he has had acquaintance with some such place before.

'The Penny Wedding' has the serious defect of wanting a principal light, but there is in it entertainment inexhaustible. How rich the incidents, how varied the characters! The accidents of light and shadow, as they flit across the throng of faces, produce the happiest illusion. No one can help sympathising with the fat old Lady who surveys with such delighted complacency the saltatory performances of her daughter, receiving thereon the compliments of the periwigged old gentleman at her elbow, who is evidently telling her, that her daughter dances with an elegance peculiar to the family—The figures of the Bride and Bridegroom are not particularly interesting, but they are not without natural grace. Nothing is better than the passive professional look of the poor fiddlers, who sit scraping away in the window-seat, contrasting as

they do with the tumultuous merriment of the guests, all of whom are flushed with the fourfold excitement of music, marriage, dancing, and — capital climax! — a good dinner.

The little picture of the 'Pedlar Showing his Wares,' is one which I can never look at without peculiar delight. The pretty young girl, strongly tempted by the beautiful gown shown her, turns timidly to her father, afraid and unwilling to ask him to purchase what she thinks he may be unable to afford; and he equally anxious to gratify her, but compelled to hesitate from prudential motives. Then the earnestness of the poor pedlar (who really looks like an honest fellow), protesting he does not get twopence by the wares he is offering, and the indignant vituperation of a neighbour, an old woman, who vociferates that she can buy the same any day at half the price. The other female is more moderate, and takes part with the pedlar. The whole picture has an exquisite air of truth and nature— Without stopping to particularise the varied merits of the 'Rent Day,' I cannot pass it without adverting to what appears to me to be the happiest incident in the composition. I allude to the group of farmers, who, having done with the Audit, are seated at the dinner-table, manfully determined to eat till they can eat no more—Not a muscle is visible in their faces, except the masticators; so far from exchanging a word with each other, they exchange not a look; as Cowper says on a similar occasion, 'It is no time to joke!'—Every man of them is convinced that he pays an immoderately high rent, and is intent on exacting as large a

drawback as possible; and judging by the style in which they set-to, their Landlords, if they entertained them often, would be no great gainers by them, pay as high rents as they might—The footman, tugging with desperate energy at a tight cork, his features convulsed with the effort, has such identity, that it would in these days pass for a photograph.

'Blind Man's Buff' is gloriously exhilarating. Here are no figures grouped together by rule. The arrangement, although profoundly scientific, *appears to be* wholly fortuitous, and teems with fun and frolic. One urchin has his shins broken by the upset of a stool, another pulls the skirts of the blinded figure; and a group just within a hair's-breadth of his outstretched hands, hold their breath, and are jammed so tight into a corner, that a boy among them is half-suffocated. Equally imperilled is the poor girl, who, beset by two or three lovers at once, struggles in vain to escape those flying gallantries, with a view to which we presume this pleasant diversion to have been invented.

These works are marked by playful fancy, gentle sentiment, and racy humour; but Wilkie was able, when the subject demanded, to excite sterner emotions, and awaken deeper chords of feeling.

The picture of 'John Knox Preaching' is distinguished by a depth of *chiaroscuro*, and a solemnity of effect, harmonising well with the occasion—It is impossible to witness the deep interest evinced by the Congregation, without becoming one of them. The action of Knox himself, however, is certainly extravagant, better befitting some Ranter at an American

revival, than the stern but rational Reformer. The group of Ladies is peculiarly excellent, the best female figures, I think, extant from the pencil of Wilkie. Like Raffaelle in the Cartoon of 'Paul Preaching,' he has made Woman the first proselyte. Scepticism, bigotry, and the pride of controversy, he has left in their proper sphere—among the Male auditory.

'The Chelsea Pensioners Reading the Gazette of the Battle of Waterloo.'—Nothing can be more rich, picturesque, and animated than this composition. The sense of hilarious excitement dominates throughout, in such a degree, indeed, as might have imparted to the whole scene too much the appearance of a mere holiday, but for one touch of *pathos*, most judiciously introduced. A soldier's wife, with an infant in her arms, presses eagerly yet fearfully forward, to gain intelligence of her husband; her suspense almost amounts to agony, reminding us that other feelings are connected with the glories of war than those of joy and triumph. But the incident is not rendered too prominent, nor allowed to interfere with what forms the main character of the picture, the expression of just and patriotic exultation at the intelligence received, the Gazette of the greatest of victories!

It is a subject of regret, as I have already remarked, that Wilkie should have been induced to abandon the pure silvery style with which he commenced, and which had borne him to the top of fame—He passed indeed to the opposite extreme, adopting a dark asphaltic tone of colour, overglazed and *rotten-ripe*. This has been ascribed to his having imbibed, during

his foreign travels, a passion for the old Masters; but the truth is, that Wilkie, under whatever impulse, had changed his style before visiting the Continent, and it had been well if this mistake had been confined to his mode of colouring. But, unhappily, he took up an ambition to paint large pictures, a style of Art for which he had neither taste nor feeling—I gladly abstain from any lengthened comment on his life-size works; they unite all sorts of contrary faults, they are tinny and leathery, flimsy and heavy, woolly and washy. Even the power of telling his story, that faculty with which he was so preeminently gifted, seems to desert him when he works on a large canvas. As a portrait-painter he failed signally. He was honoured by Court patronage, but obtained little, I believe, by that distinction, beyond the dissatisfaction of his Royal sitters, and the sneers of their attendants. To this branch of Art he had, no doubt, been attracted by the hope of large profits, but the experiment convinced him that the facile and lucrative practice, as it is deemed, of portrait-painting, is not a trade to be taken up *extempore*. There is no question that every man is right, especially in a country like England, in drawing the largest possible revenue from his talents, but what is prudence in one pursuit may be imprudence in another, and it fares ill with the Artist, who, disobeying his instincts, travels out of the track indicated by his genius, to make sacrifices at the altar of Mammon—I am far, however, from accusing Wilkie of so base a passion as avarice; I have heard indeed, that if at any time he showed an avidity for money-making, the motive which influenced

him was generous, and had reference to others rather than to himself—He could not but be sensible, however, that he had got into a false position, and as the best mode of extricating himself, he again determined on travel; having the collateral motives of recruiting his health, and of seeking in the aspects, manners, and costumes of different countries, new subjects for his pencil, and sources of yet unexplored interest. These objects he had in great measure accomplished, and was returning home with reinvigorated nerves and well-filled portfolios—when, to the infinite surprise and regret of his friends and the public—it was announced that his career had suddenly terminated—It seemed a strange and unhappy fatality, that this distinguished Artist, whose genius was so peculiarly national, and whose happiest efforts were founded on domestic feelings and home associations, should have been destined to die far from his native shore, and to find his grave in the depths of the wide Atlantic!

SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE.

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SHOULD it be the fate of this brilliant Artist to miss that enduring fame which he probably anticipated, and which was confidently predicted for him by his numerous friends and admirers, his lot, after all, was one which few professors of the pencil, could they have made it their own, would have felt inclined to repine at. His success was splendid beyond example. Vandyke, while yet in the meridian of his career, had nearly exhausted, it may be presumed, his English patronage, since he had been, some time before his death, negociating with the King of France for the execution of great works in Paris—Sir Joshua Reynolds, in the zenith of his fame, saw his portrait-practice carried away for awhile by an Artist so utterly inferior to himself as Romney—But Lawrence not only succeeded in distancing his rivals almost at the commencement of his course, but to the last kept ahead of all competitors—He received latterly, larger prices than had ever before been paid to a Portrait Painter. Sir Joshua's price for the three-quarter picture never exceeded fifty guineas—that of Lawrence was three hundred; and so great was the prestige of his name, so vast his popularity, that had he demanded thrice that sum, I verily believe that it would have been dis-

bursed to him just as readily. Half the price, as is usual, was paid him at the first sitting, yet, although his Gallery contained a far greater number of pictures than could possibly be finished during his life, this obvious fact did not prevent shoals of new sitters from pouring in, anxious for the chance, on any terms, of obtaining their portraits by Sir Thomas Lawrence. His was indeed an unprecedented and most enviable position. The Public had learned to look at his pencil as the medium through which they had to make acquaintance with the most distinguished and illustrious of their day; Kings, Heroes, Statesmen, Patriots, Poets, and *Lions* of all sorts—And in so sweet and affable an aspect did Lawrence present his Lions, as to create on all sides a sense of benevolent satisfaction; the Public liked the Lions for not looking so formidable as they expected; the Lions liked the Public for paying them the homage of its admiration—Lawrence's sitting-chair was inaccessible to age, ugliness, or vulgarity; these qualities at least, if they found their way into it, never came out again, unless indeed, like the characters from the mill in the pantomime, transformed nto youth, beauty, and elegance. Almack's was less efficient as the marriage-mart of fashion, than the Gallery of Lawrence: there, or transferred thence to the walls of the Royal Academy, shone the young belles of the season, filing along in beautiful succession, and there might aristocratic bachelors saunter deliberately, and, taking counsel from their eyeglasses, ponder—pick—and choose.

Lawrence, no doubt, began his career with that pro-

found admiration of Reynolds which was common to the young Artists of the day, and many of his earlier pictures, in which the imitation of Sir Joshua is evident, are among his best. But as time elapsed, and he drew experience from the annual displays at Somerset House, he became convinced that the depth, tone, and regulated harmony which characterised the style of his great predecessor, were not the qualities which *tell* most effectively in Exhibitions of newly-painted pictures. Reynolds himself had been made painfully aware of this; it is indeed on record, that his works frequently required the full weight of his reputation to bear him up, amidst the flaring novelties which surrounded them. Crude colour, glitter, and glare were perceived to be the best constituents of Exhibition effect; and Lawrence, instead of risking martyrdom by attempting to stem the rising corruption, determined to ride on the top of it—Accordingly, he struck out a style of colouring, the key of which was *pure white*, enlivened, as regards the human complexion, with a slight infusion of red, and this was called *freshness*. There can be no stronger evidence of Lawrence's talents, or rather of the influence they exercised, than the fact, that not only the small fry of the Profession, but the most eminent among his rivals, men who had established their reputations on totally opposite principles, abandoned their own styles, and adopted his. There was a striking instance of this in the strong-minded Opie, an Artist who, coming to town an uneducated youth, and with little knowledge of painting, except from the promptings of instinct, astonished the

Public with a style, which in depth, strength, and bold relief, bore a strong resemblance to Rembrandt or Caravaggio. His works were utterly destitute of refinement, but this deficiency was atoned for by their intense truth and unaffected simplicity—These, in fact, were his only merits, but these he chose to forego, and in a vain attempt to follow the fashionable favourite, lost in his later, the reputation which he had gained by his earlier practice. Even Fuseli, profound in Art, learned, tenacious, and irascible, succumbed to the ascendancy of Lawrence. On one occasion, when a large picture by the Professor had just been placed on the walls, Lawrence, in his usual tone of courtly deference, ventured to suggest some alterations; 'Take the *broshe* and make them then,' cried Fuseli, stalking away impatiently. Returning at the end of an hour, he was perfectly enchanted with Lawrence's retouchings, declaring aloud that he scarcely knew his own picture again! Such was Exhibition effect, an Art distinct from that of painting, and of which Lawrence was, perhaps, the greatest master who ever mystified the public. This was *his* Cleopatra, for which he lost—what? not popularity or fortune, certainly, for it bore him to the top of both—So far, indeed, was he himself from having any suspicion that he was working on a false principle, that he was frequently heard to declare, that whatever skill he had acquired, he owed entirely to the habit of adjusting his works to this fallacious medium. But he did more with a bad, than others could do with better styles. He succeeded in establishing an impression, that *white*, which he called

light, was the true standard of colour; his practice was, of course, exaggerated by his imitators, and the results soon became manifest in the Annual Exhibitions, which gradually assumed an appearance by no means dissimilar to that of chalkpits—Foreign Amateurs, on entering the rooms, were heard to declare that they had not witnessed such an accumulation of glaring white since they had passed the snow-clad Alps.

It was Lawrence's perverse (or fortunate) fatality to be more estimated for his faults than his merits—He had a singularly fine perception of female beauty, but he was less admired for his accurate delineation of it, than for a certain peculiar and extrinsic air which he gave to his Lady-sitters; sometimes of lively coquettishness, but much more frequently of voluptuous languor, which was said, whether with justice may be doubted, to reflect the aspect of high-life. But whatever it reflected, it had for the whole *genus homo* an intense fascination, every man admitting meanwhile, that it was not exactly the sort of expression which he would wish to recognise in his own female relatives. It had been remarked by Reynolds, who appreciated and encouraged the rising talents of Lawrence, that the young Artist had a sense of the graceful, which, unless controlled by the exercise of a rigorous judgment, might run into disagreeable excess, and Reynolds' surmise was fully justified. Without charging the whole of Lawrence's works with so odious a fault as that of affectation, they had frequently a sort of ultra-refinement, which ran closely on that disagreeable quality—He held a charmed Cestus, but had no discrimination in the use of

it; his ladies and his gentlemen were all graceful alike —Now the proper characteristic of male deportment is *ease*, not *grace*, but so inveterately elegant were the *beaux* of Lawrence, that they might have served for frontispiece portraits either of the heroes, or the authors of fashionable novels.—In fact, had a prizefighter sate to Lawrence, he would have come out of his hands not only a fine but a superfine gentleman. This sort of embellishment was sometimes, no doubt, very agreeable to those who were made the subjects of it, but it militated fatally against a grand, true, and characteristic style of portrait-painting.

Lawrence's tastes also were considerably tinctured by his associations with the Drama. John Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, and other distinguished performers were among his earliest and most particular friends, and he had himself evinced great talent in private Theatricals. It is not extraordinary, therefore, that he should have transferred to his own Art, a tinge of his stage predilections, forgetting that a certain exaggeration, which is not only a legitimate but an indispensable element in the Actor's art, becomes insufferable when associated with Painting. There are few of his figures, even those in which extreme simplicity is aimed at, which do not seem conscious of an audience. Look, *par exemple*, at his 'Hamlet Soliloquizing'—in many respects a really beautiful work, and so solemn in its general effect, that it was once purchased as an Altarpiece for a provincial Church; but has this figure really the air of a person absorbed in deep meditation? Has it not, on the contrary, an expression meant to *strike*, and evidently

adjusted to the footlights?—There is, I have always thought, a strong resemblance between the painting of Lawrence, and the poetry of Darwin. It would be difficult to say what you wish altered; it impresses you with a character of genius and power, yet there is about it a sort of tinsel and pretension, which makes you half-angry with what you cannot help admiring.

Lawrence obtained among his contemporaries the reputation of being so admirable a draughtsman, that any one in Artistic circles, who had ventured to dispute that opinion, would have incurred a severe rebuke. True it is, that his drawing had this peculiarity—his forms, whether right or wrong, were marked with such clearness, distinctness, and precision, that what appeared so confidently done, could scarcely be suspected of being erroneous. Nevertheless, such questionable anatomy, necks of such enormous length, and feet so dwarfishly small, as his figures sometimes presented, come scarcely within the category of human proportions. I recollect that when the portrait of George IV., presented by that monarch to Pope Pius VII., arrived at Rome, the comparison of the portly *corpus* with the elegant spindles which supported it, occasioned much amusement among the Italian Artists—

> Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care,
> Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are.

Such might have been Lawrence's maxim in regard to his critics, whom, had they assailed him by hundreds, he might have answered triumphantly by pointing to his works on the walls of the Exhibition, and the admiring

crowds who gazed on them. And who, that recollects his pictures in that position, will deny that they frequently did look enchanting and beautiful? When one meets occasionally, in the Galleries or apartments to which they belong, with pictures by this Artist, which we remember to have seen at Somerset House, glittering as the stars of the season, it is difficult to reconcile our past with our present impressions, or to understand on what principle was founded that extraordinary attraction which fascinated all ranks, and took the town by storm—I recollect to have been strongly impressed with this feeling at Goodwood, the Duke of Richmond's, where a whole-length portrait of the Duchess, by Lawrence, hangs opposite a picture, by Vandyke, of King Charles and his family—a duplicate of the one at Windsor. The picture of the Duchess, when exhibited at Somerset House, was considered so eminently beautiful, that it was almost idolized; and I have no doubt, that had Vandyke's picture been placed in juxtaposition with it *there*, its lustre would have paled before that of its modern rival. But what are the effects of the two pictures as seen at present, not in the gaudiness and glare of an Exhibition-room, but in the just and regulated light of a private Gallery? The picture of Vandyke, subdued, solemn, and exquisitely harmonious, impresses you, both with a feeling of respect for the persons represented, and a sense of the majesty of Art—while that of our recent Apelles, I regret to say, has very much the look of a dashing sign-painting—And a comparison of the works of Lawrence in the Waterloo Gallery at Windsor Castle, with

those of Vandyke in the adjacent apartment, will lead us pretty much to the same conclusion. Yet, perhaps, the comparisons here suggested, may rather be considered to indicate the styles of Painting of two different epochs, than to furnish an accurate ordeal by which to test the relative powers of the Artists. Painting, in the time of Vandyke, had not learned to dance jigs in Exhibition-rooms, nor to practise the tricks of a Show-booth—Nevertheless, it would be absurd to suppose, that any man not gifted with great and original powers, could have acquired such popularity as that obtained by Lawrence. Much of his charm, undoubtedly, is to be resolved into his peculiar aptitude in catching the graces of Fashion, yet it must be admitted, that in whatever degree he sacrificed to false taste, he threw over his works a breathing of poetic feeling, which distinguished them from the more literal and prosaic performances of his contemporary rivals—Had Lawrence been born in another age and country, and practised his Art under different inspirations, it may be averred, I think, that he had genius which might have given him rank in the loftier departments of Art — This surely can scarcely be disputed by anyone who has seen the colossal picture painted by him in his youth, of 'Satan calling his Legions.' So noble a conception could only have sprung from a deep soil, nor was other evidence wanted of great faculties, than the nerve which dared to grapple with the mighty imagery of Milton, and which transmitted to canvas, with corresponding power, the 'Lost Archangel' of the Poet, beautiful in ruin, magnificent in despair!—Such an attempt in

weaker hands would only have incurred ridicule, but Lawrence had not mistaken his strength, and his picture was hailed by universal acclamation as one of the noblest productions of modern Art.

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